

# International Communist

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## Trotskyism in Vietnam

### For revolutionary unity on a revolutionary programme

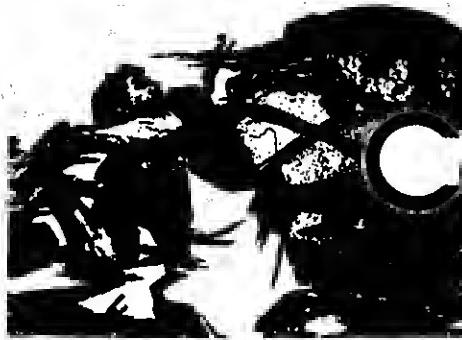
### Theses on Revolutionary Unity

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THE  
DEVELOPMENT  
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IN RUSSIA



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## The 3rd Conference of the I-CL

In 1967 Workers' Fight, the major predecessor of the I-CL, made its first public appearance with an appeal, 'For a Trotskyist Regroupment'. In 1968 WF was the only tendency of the British far left to take up the call for revolutionary unity put out by the International Socialism group. The WF tendency inside IS — the Trotskyist Tendency — had revolutionary left unity as one of the planks of its platform.

In December 1971 IS expelled the Workers Fight tendency. We immediately opened discussions on unity with the IMG. We came to the conclusion that differences of politics and orientation made unity not feasible at that time. The IMG, apparently, came to the same conclusion — it was they, not we, who broke off discussions then and on two subsequent occasions.

In September 1974 WF issued an Open Letter for Revolutionary Regroupment; and in December 1975 WF was able to fuse with the ex-IS Left Faction to form the I-CL.

In September 1976 a section of the ex-LF comrades bolted from the I-CL just two weeks before the I-CL conference, at which they would probably be in a minority on certain questions. Despite a fight for unity by the I-CL majority, guaranteeing the comrades all the rights of a minority within a democratic centralist organisation, the splitters could not be held back.

The second I-CL conference, meeting in April 1977, reaffirmed the policy for regroupment contained in the December 1975 political resolution of the I-CL fusion.

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## Discussion

# Theses on Revolutionary Unity

1. The basic Marxist programme — class struggle, workers' councils, proletarian revolution, proletarian dictatorship, abolition of private property and the wages system, Internationalism — and Marxist policies for the problems of the working-class struggle, are not dogmas for the enlightened few. They are the rational and logical conclusions for all militants who honestly set out to fight for the emancipation of the working class.

Thus democratic-centralist organisational unity — despite differences on secondary matters — is possible for the revolutionary vanguard, given sufficient decisive experiences in class struggle, and given adequate activity on the part of a revolutionary-Marxist nucleus.

The unity of the great majority (at least) of the revolutionary vanguard is also necessary (barring freak variants) for the revolution, and a major advantage for revolutionary struggle at any time.

2. From the 1930s, the basic divisions in the working-class movement were between the reformists, tied to the capitalist state; the Stalinists, tied to the reactionary bureaucracy of the USSR (and, in recent decades, more and more embedded in their own capitalist states, too); and the Trotskyists, the only tendency dedicated to the fight for workers' power.

No section of the Trotskyist movement has become a satellite of capitalism or Stalinism. Yet today the Trotskyist movement is split into many different tendencies. Why?

After World War 2, the Trotskyists had to readjust and redefine their revolutionary perspectives. With limited forces, and few experienced leaders, they failed to do it adequately or unanimously. In the early 1950s the Trotskyist movement split on a world scale.

The split was not a politically clear one. But it introduced an important, durable rift in the Trotskyist movement — and laid the ground for further, often irresponsible, factionalism and splits.

On the one hand there are the sectarians, for whom all political life centres round the factional self-promotion of their organisation, the denunciation of 'revisionism', and the proclamation of the 'correct' combination of slogans from the Transi-

tional Programme — which History will reward by producing mass struggles from the 'womb of its ever-present catastrophic 'crisis'. On the other hand, those who make a more serious attempt to analyse the real movement of the class struggle — but then end up posing themselves as Marxist advisers to the most promising leftward-moving current.

The sectarian tendency is represented in Britain in a grotesquely degenerate form by the "Workers Revolutionary Party" — and in a milder form by the Workers Socialist League. The mainstream has been represented since the 1960s by the International Marxist Group. Surrounding these currents is a gamut of secondary groupings.

There exist also militants who are trying to construct a Trotskyist tendency free from both dead-end sectarianism and supine opportunism. That is our role; in that sphere lie our achievements since 1987.

What has happened to the Trotskyist movement since the late 1940s is that it has been reduced to a spectrum of sects — within which some groups struggle, with greater or lesser success, to rise above the status of sects.

The divisions among would-be Trotskyists cannot simply be undone; the political issues cannot be forgotten. Yet a way forward to revolutionary unity must be found. Seeking revolutionary unity, and working to replace sectarian obscurantism by scientific analysis, go hand in hand in revolutionary Trotskyist activity which is regulated by responsibility to the class struggle.

3. It has been the method of sectarianism and disruption to attempt to foresee and anticipate future differences that 'might' arise or can be made to arise now through uninhibited extrapolation and reduction of the possibly rich (living and interacting) process of development to unilinear unfolding of thoughts.

The search for 'formulation' or 'a formula' which is a 'guarantee' (either in the face of hostility or against the possibility of mistakes) has occupied sectarians calling themselves Trotskyists in the period of the post-war crisis. Whereas Marxism teaches us that we must work with 'formulas'

which are only approximations to reality, which need to be continuously measured, formulated and reformulated, as part of the living practice of Marxists in the class struggle, and which cannot be fixed — the sectarian seeks to deal with problems which arise from the fluid nature of the work of revolutionaries and of reality itself by finding a formulation which answers in advance the problems of real political activity. He seeks to freeze reality and gains feelings of security from the delusion that some formulation to be arrived at now, or which is to be found in the past, actually does that.

In fact no formulation, not even the most fundamental ideas of Marxism, separate or apart from the judgment of groups and individuals (which however may be guided by the formulations of the past) can guard against the problems and the possible mistakes which are part of living political activity.

Responsible communists will fight to prevent the formation of sectarian groupings on the basis of 'possible' future differences amongst revolutionaries by insisting on the objective regulating function of the class struggle (and the responsibilities of Marxists to it) now in defining and governing political demarcations in the workers' movement. This concern with the task to be done, with the practical work of communists, is what separates the Marxist revolutionaries from the 'Marxist' schoolmen and sectarians. It is what prevents a concern for political and theoretical clarity and precision from degenerating into irresponsible pedantry and leading to the creation of as many organisations as there are nuances of opinion.

4. Operating in this situation, the ICL cannot and must not wait for revolutionary unity.

(i) We must actively seek out opportunities for working towards revolutionary unity, and pursue them wherever they exist.

(ii) As long as unity cannot be achieved, we fight vigorously to build our own tendency; including in competition with other tendencies in the revolutionary left.

5. In general, the question of unity is posed thus: Political life is a process of grouping and regrouping around the political issues posed by the class struggle nationally and internationally.

It is the major issues, the issues which concentrate the minds and the activity of revolutionaries, which should decide fusions, splits, and organisational demarcations. But to understand this in terms only of the very biggest political events (like the October Revolution) which more or less do the work of political selection for us mechanically, can lead to passivity and fatalism about the state of the revolutionary current now, and to a smug organisational sectarianism.

For it is the duty of revolutionaries actively to seek out the links in the chain of events which will organise the maximum number of revolutionary militants around a programme that is minimally adequate, in an organisation which requires no more in the way of homogenisation than that level necessary to allow functioning as revolutionaries in the existing and foreseeable class struggle — and in the historically necessary class struggle of the proletariat, too — while striving for the greatest ideological purity and homogeneity.

6. The positions of certain currents in the labour movement put their ideologists clearly on the anti-proletarian side of the barricades. The parliamentary democrats, for example (though millions of workers with parliamentary illusions will be with their class in any decisive struggle). We must draw political and organisational conclusions from such an account of them.

Among militants who honestly set out to fight for the rudimentary ideas of revolutionary communism, mistakes and differences should be containable within a common disciplined organisation. This applies to nearly all the 'Trotskyist' or near-'Trotskyist' left in Britain.

Honest errors — if they are serious — tend to shade over into fakey or **sectarian sclerosis**. This has happened with the 'Militant' or the Lembertists in one direction, the RCG or the Spartacists in another. The major groups of the revolutionary left — IMG, SWP, WSL, in Britain, and nearly all the 'Trotskyist' current internationally — have fallen into fakey on particular issues; yet their political positions as such would not prevent revolutionary unity with them.

The IMG, the SWP, and the WSL have become what they are through the interaction between the social and organisational reality of those organisations (petty bourgeois orientation, crude workerism, bureaucratism, etc) and their political and ideological errors.

Yet these characteristics should not be seen as fixed forever. For us at present:

Unity with the SWP is ruled out by their bureaucratism. Indeed their almost-complete lack of conscientious political accounting (arising from their conception of the party);

Unity with the IMG is ruled out by their opportunist orientation ('broad left'-ism, electoralism, etc) coupled with lack of willingness to confront serious political/ideological issues (e.g. in debate with us); coupled with lack of serious proletarian orientation.

Unity with the WSL is ruled out by their sectarianism (organisational and political).

As long as this remains the case we have to pursue political **compatition** with these tendencies, while seeking comradely dialogue where possible. But a change of mind on their part, or (more likely) a change of events which re-focuses the attention of revolutionaries, could open new possibilities for us. Even if this remains only a 'theoretical' possibility, we must keep it open, if only for the sake of relating to critical tendencies within, or coming from the SWP, IMG and WSL.

7. The onus should always be on those who want to avoid unity to show 'why not'. If the onus is on proving the need for unity of Marxist militants in one organisation, then the very formulation has a sectarian bias. Instead of focus on the historical task of creating a revolutionary party (with definable problems, divergences, disagreements, historical episodes which are 'still alive' and so on) all focus and sense of proportion is lost, and any whim or subjectivism (or historical accident) can become an iron-clad principle of no less importance than the historic task. Disagreements which are of mainly historic interest can 'loom' as large as the immediate struggle. Errors or inadequacies — which intelligent people should mark, learn from and remember — become *sins* whose stain is sought after in every new event. Paranoid feelings cepebia of any vague formulation and with shifting content quite naturally are part of the scene where the onus is on proof of the virtues of unity and not on the need for division.

8. Revolutionary unity is a constant aim. As regards any particular proposal for unification, the question is: is it possible? is there the political basis for it to be more than a temporary alliance bound to fly apart — with harmful results — at the first test; what price has to be paid in temporary inward-turning of energy and possible temporary clarity; can we do it on a principled political basis and without gagging ourselves ideologically?

# For revolutionary unity on a revolutionary programme

WE WELCOME the Socialist Challenge Editorial Board Draft Statement on 'The Basis for Revolutionary Unity'. With this political statement the discussion inside the far left on revolutionary unity is put on a much less abstract basis.

We welcome your call for open discussion. We also welcome the general approach put forward in your Introduction on how to set about the necessary political demarcation. Neither abstract adherence to the historic tradition of Bolshevik-Leninism, nor agreement or disagreement on a few short-term tactical questions, can be decisive: the crucial criterion is where each tendency stands in relation to "the greatest tests of the international class struggle".

But your Draft Statement seems not to correspond to this method. Though on some points it gives rather detailed lists of slogans, it is almost entirely devoid of concrete references to the actual tests of class struggle. On issue after issue, it contents itself with general formulations which are not made sufficiently precise to be a guide to action in any real "test of the class struggle".

What we need in a programmatic basis for revolutionary unity, surely, is:

1. A clear and concise summing-up of the fundamental theory and tradition on which we base ourselves;
2. A review of the major recent and current tests of the class struggle, which divide off the healthy revolutionary tendencies from (on the one hand) the lifeless sectarians, and (on the other hand) those who show a fatal weakness in the direction of opportunist concessions to reformism and Stalinism.

Obviously complete agreement on every point in that programmatic basis will not then be a precondition for unity. For example, a tendency from a different tradition may evolve positively to the point where unity is possible without disavowing that tradition entirely. In the unifi-

cation which created the I-CL, the majority of one of the components ('Workers Power') had an important and potentially far-reaching difference with the theoretical tradition of the I-CL majority, in that they considered the Stalinist states to be 'state capitalist'. In the fusion statement we stated clearly what the majority position of the unified I-CL was, and explicitly noted the existence of a minority position; and likewise in Workers Fight's Open Letter for Revolutionary Regroupment in 1974, we stated our position on the Stalinist states with the explicit reservation that unity was not ruled out with tendencies who had a different sociological evaluation of those states and a different political position on the defence of the USSR against imperialism.

That approach seems to us better than trying to find some 'compromise' formula to bridge such differences — which is apparently what you have tried to do in your Draft Statement. There can be unity despite disagreements: but for that unity to be honest and serious, the disagreements must be explicitly stated and assessed, not covered over with vacuous catch-all formulas.

What are the crucial 'tests of the international class struggle' since the 1940s, and especially since 1968, which must be dealt with in a statement for revolutionary unity?

## 1. STALINISM

The creation of the deformed workers' states is undoubtedly the most crucial of the post-world war 2 developments requiring a response from revolutionaries. Most recently this problem has been brought into sharp focus by the NLF's victory in Vietnam.

Our major current disagreement with you is on the necessity of a supplementary working-class political revolution in Vietnam and Cuba. We consider that this disagreement is not just a difference of estimation (there is room for debate; for example, on the pace and extent of bureaucratisation in Cuba), but a difference of viewpoint. Even in Cuba in the 1960s, when the Castroite leadership might well have not opposed (or even supported) a move to workers' democracy, it was necessary for revolutionary Marxists to work for the building of an independent proletarian-communist party with a programme of soviet democracy; your tendency, in contrast, has tended to adopt the viewpoint of the general 'revolutionary process', whether in Cuba, in Vietnam, or earlier in China or Yugoslavia.

The Draft Statement does not cover these questions at all. It implies that the Stalinist states are non-capitalist, but does not even state that clearly (and it needs to be stated clearly for the purposes of a discussion with the Workers' League or the Big Flame group). It says "defence (against what?) of any States which successfully overthrow capitalism", but doesn't say which States this refers to. It speaks about "the bureaucratically dominated States" and "support for the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracies", but never says which states other than the USSR and Eastern Europe are included in these generalisations (and that is important not only for clarifying your position, but also in relation to Big Flame and their Maoist leanings).

Further, the Draft Statement concludes by saying that the revolutionary "organisation must seek to build and become part of a revolutionary International". The coyness with which you avoid saying which International does not seem to us very useful. Moreover, it should be stated clearly that we need an International working to build proletarian parties in all countries, including in Cuba, including in Vietnam.

## 2. SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

Another major test for the revolutionary movement since world war 2 has been the continued hold of social democracy over the working class of many advanced capitalist countries, including Britain, and the need to work out tactics in relation to this.

Your Draft Statement is clear on the pro-capitalist nature of the Labour Party, and on the fact that it is nevertheless organically linked to the working class. (It does not, however, give any accounting on the apparent unclarity on these points in relation to Portuguese and Spanish social democracy of your sister organisations: the call for united CP-SP-revolutionary election candidates in Spain, the FUR policy on the SP and then the LCI-PRT policy for a Soares government in Portugal).

It is necessary to draw out conclusions from the generalities.

[a] The principal way in which opportunism in relation to the "reactionary and utopian illusion to see a transition to socialism achieved by a Labour Government" has expressed itself in the would-be revolutionary left is the slogan "Labour Government with a socialist programme". This should be condemned by name.

[b] Conclusions from the fact that the Labour Government is a capitalist government must

be drawn in relation to the current talk of "saving the Labour Government". There is a point at which necessary pedagogic adaptation to workers' anti-Toryism shades over into endorsement of "saving the Labour Government" (on condition that it adopts more socialist policies, etc. etc.) in the manner of the CP. It seems to us that Socialist Challenge has often gone past that point. It avoids stating clearly that the class struggle must be prosecuted whether the electoral effects for Labour are good or bad.

[c] In the militant sections of the working class, the problem is not so much illusions in the Labourite mainstream (Callaghan, Healey, Murray) as illusions in the Labourite left (Benn, 'Tribune', etc.) It must be stated clearly that the Labour Left is no less bourgeois, and no closer to the fundamental interests of the working class, than the Labour Right. Propaganda along the lines of 'Labour left to power with a socialist programme', in the manner of the Workers Socialist League today, is even more pernicious than the slogan of 'Labour Government with a socialist programme'.

Your Draft Statement says nothing about the 'Class Struggle Left Wing' which has nevertheless (in one form or another) been a major feature of your politics since 1975. You do talk about "building oppositions within the trade unions and other mass organisations" — but you don't make it clear whether you mean a revolutionary fight against all wings of the bureaucratic leadership (with possible tactical alliances for particular purposes with the bureaucratic Left against the Right) or a general alliance with the bureaucratic Left against the Right, as you have advocated in the past.

Another question that needs to be discussed is standing candidates on a 'Socialist Unity' programme advancing no perspective beyond a left Labour government, against the Labour Party, which seems to us both politically opportunist and organisationally sectarian.

### **3. THE GENERAL STRIKE**

Since 1905 the General Strike has been a central question of revolutionary strategy — and even more so since France 1968. Your own tendency made 'general strike' the centre of its agitation for over a year (1973-74); yet the Draft Statement says nothing about your subordination of the general strike to parliamentary politics in that "test of the class struggle" ('General Strike to kick the Tories out'), nor about your earlier passive and sectarian approach to the most advanced mass strike movement in Britain since 1926 (July 1972, when the IMG argued against "calls to action"). Our position is outlined in our Manifesto. We propose discussion on that basis.

### **4. INTERNATIONALISM**

There have been two very sharp "tests of the class struggle" in Britain recently in relation to internationalism:

[a] The Republican struggle in Ireland. On this, your Draft Statement does not include an unambiguous statement of revolutionary defeatism, i.e. of solidarity with the Republican forces against British imperialism.

[b] The EEC. Your Draft Statement does not mention this, which was nevertheless the dominating issue of British politics in 1975, is still not dead in Britain (the direct elections controversy), and is still a live issue in Spain and Portugal. Our position is that workers should refuse to choose between the capitalist EEC and an 'independent' capitalist Britain.

### **5. THE WOMEN'S MOVEMENT**

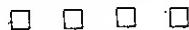
Your Draft Statement simply calls for "the building of a mass women's movement", with no further class or political definition — thus not making clear at all your attitude to feminism. We propose for discussion our policy for the building of a mass working-class based women's movement with a fight for a communist programme.

### **6. RACISM AND FASCISM**

Your Draft Statement is incomplete on this, too. It talks of "Abolition of the immigration laws", not making clear whether this is meant to imply only opposition to the present immigration laws or principled opposition to all immigration controls. It does not mention "No platform for fascists", nor the question of removing avowed racists from positions in the labour movement. It also includes a phrase of uncertain meaning, "full self-organisation of the black community".

A question on which there certainly is a difference between us is calling on the state to ban fascists. Our position against calling for such bans (a position, moreover, expressed in many

fundamental documents of the Trotskyist movement, such as 'War and the Fourth International', 1934) has been explained in Workers Fight no. 72 (6th October 1974) and many times since then.



Naturally complete and perfect agreement on all these issues is not necessary for unity. But they are, surely, some of the key "tests of the international class struggle" around which discussion must revolve.

We have many other criticisms of your Draft Statement. The fact that tradition alone is not enough, and the fact that it is possible for groupings from different traditions to unite, do not relieve a revolutionary tendency (aspiring to be the 'memory of the class') from the necessity of adhering to and defending a definite doctrine and tradition. That we adhere to the Trotskyist tradition is not politically meaningless, nor is it politically meaningless when other comrades adhere to different traditions. This should have found a mention in the Draft Statement.

Moreover, some of the general positions in the Draft Statement are unclearly, badly, or wrongly formulated. To give a few examples: "Defence and extension of: human production, values...." is a dubious concept from a Marxist point of view. To say that the "labour lieutenants of capital" "do not hesitate to hand the working class over to the most vile and barbarous forms of dictatorship if they fear that capitalist rule may be threatened" is actually ultra-left: the "labour lieutenants of capital" do hesitate in that situation, since they know that the barbarous dictatorship is likely to strike at them as well as the rank and file. And the mention of nationalisation should include the call for "no compensation", and the necessary distinction between state-capitalist nationalisation and nationalisation by a workers' state.

We also consider that a statement for revolutionary unity should include some reference to the methods and priorities of practical work by a united organisation; in particular it should establish the priority of work at a rank and file level in the factories and the trade unions. The Draft Statement does not do this.

However, the most important questions to discuss are the key class-struggle questions. You already know our present opinion: that your false positions on those questions (as we consider them) add up to a chronic political instability, a chronic tendency to seek ways of riding the wave of the 'revolutionary process' rather than mapping out an independent working-class policy. Nevertheless we believe discussion can be valuable even where there are large differences — it can contribute to clearer and more comradely relations in the far left, to greater united action where that is politically possible, and perhaps even to reducing the differences.

We propose an open and public discussion. As our contribution to that discussion we put forward this statement and our Manifesto, 'The Fight for Workers' Power'.

POLITICAL COMMITTEE OF THE I-CL. November 1977.

#### "THE BASIS FOR REVOLUTIONARY UNITY", from Socialist Challenge, 6 October 1974.

1 The material basis to begin to liberate humanity from hunger, misery, and the drudgery of meaningless repetitive labour already exists. For the first time in history, there is the possibility of destroying racism and national oppression, achieving the liberation of women, guaranteeing democratic rights, and achieving the freedom to develop culture, science and all human capacities.

2 What prevents these achievements is the existence of capitalism and the activities of those who defend it. Two world wars, fascism, racism, sexism, and the threatened destruction of the natural environment are the price that has been paid for the survival of this system. It offers the world nothing more than increasing economic crises, imperialism, the distortion of science and culture, and ultimately the threat of nuclear annihilation. Capitalism threatens human civilisation with cata-

strophe.

#### The road to liberation

3 The social force capable of leading the struggle for the establishment of socialism is the working class. Every movement for the defence and extension of: human production, values, and democratic rights; national, sexual, and racial liberation; culture, and science can achieve these aims only by linking itself to the struggle of this class for socialism.

The working class for its part can achieve its liberation only by fighting to destroy not only economic oppression, but all forms of sexual, national, racial, and cultural oppression. The socialist revolution and the socialist reconstruction of society itself represent the fusion, not merely of the economic and political expropriation of the ruling capitalist class, but also of the struggle for the liberation of all oppressed

people.

#### What we fight for

4 As part of the struggle for socialism revolutionaries defend every historically progressive gain which has been made, and support every struggle for the interests of the exploited and oppressed. They do not counterpose the struggles of today to the socialism of tomorrow, but understand that the fight for even the most minimal needs will increasingly clash with the interests of capitalism.

Only those who reject strategic compromises with the capitalist class, and are prepared to fight it to the end will be able to defend the most elementary needs of life. In the escalating struggle of social classes, revolutionaries advance those necessary demands and forms of struggle which — to meet the needs of the exploited and oppressed — will increasingly clash with the bases of capitalist power. In Britain at the present time this includes the following:

\* The struggle for a decent standard of living; the protection and advance of living standards against inflation; the right to a job; the defence and extension of welfare state provisions; the ending of commercial secrecy; the establishment of workers' control of production; the nationalisation of all major banks, firms, and industries; the establishment of a democratically planned economy, through a socialist revolution.

\* Against sexual oppression and for the liberation of women; free abortion and contraception on demand; equal educational and training opportunities; free 24-hour community-controlled State nurseries; an end to discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation; the socialisation of domestic labour; the building of a mass women's movement.

\* Against racism; abolition of the immigration laws; defence of the black community; self-defence by the working class and oppressed against fascist organisations; full self-organisation of the black community.

\* Defence of democratic rights; repeal of repressive legislation; total independence of the trade unions and all mass organisations of the oppressed from the State; release of all political prisoners; abolition of the monarchy and House of Lords; the right of all employees, including those of the State to join a trade union or political party; support of all democratic rights of members of State forces, which weaken the cohesion of these organisations, in preparing for the disbandment of the socialist revolution of the standing army, capitalist police, and other repressive forces; self-defence of workers and the oppressed against capitalist violence.

\* The struggle for workers' democracy; the election with an automatic right of recall of all officials in the working class movement; no labour movement official to be paid more than the average wage of a skilled worker; mass democratic organisation of all struggles; the repeal of all political bans and proscriptions and the right to form opposition tendencies in the trade unions and labour movement.

#### Internationalism

5 The struggle for socialism is international. The only reliable ally the working class and oppressed of one country have is the struggle of the exploited and oppressed of other nations. The great victories against imperialism won by China, Cuba, and Vietnam have internationally weakened

capitalism and its supporters. The struggle of workers and other oppressed people in Eastern Europe and other bureaucratically dominated States weakens the bureaucracy of the USSR and the international Stalinist system.

The victory of socialist revolution in an imperialist country would have immense repercussions on a global scale. Following a successful revolution in any State, the construction of socialism could not be completed in a single country, but only as part of the international extension of the revolution. The working class of Britain and every other country can be victorious only through linking themselves indissolubly to the international class struggle.

In Britain our necessary internationalist tasks include the fight for:

- \* Immediate and unconditional British military and political withdrawal from Ireland and the right of its people to self-determination; the release of all Irish political prisoners and the repeal of the 'Prevention of Terrorism' Act; the creation of a mass solidarity movement to help those fighting against British imperialism to achieve these aims.

- \* Immediate withdrawal of all British forces from abroad; independence for all remaining colonies; unilateral nuclear disarmament by Britain and withdrawal from NATO and all imperialist alliances; breaking of all links with the racist white-settler regimes of Southern Africa; support of all struggles for national liberation; support for all exploited countries in struggles against imperialism; defence of any States which successfully overthrow capitalism.

- \* The right of the people of Scotland and Wales to determine what their relationship to the British State should be, including the right to their own independence if they so wish.

- \* Support and defence of all struggles for human, social, and democratic rights in the USSR and other bureaucratically dominated States; support for the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the Stalinist bureaucracies.

- \* Support of all international workers' struggles; total opposition and defeatism in imperialist war.

#### Against strategic alliances with Capital

6. The struggle for the needs of the oppressed and exploited is in irreconcilable contradiction with the interest of capitalism and its supporters. The fight for even the most basic human rights involves an increasing clash with the structures of capitalist society. It is this

reality which determines our actions as revolutionary socialists. The mass struggle of the working class and other oppressed people independently of the capitalist class is the only road to success. Neither in the imperialist countries nor in the colonial world is there any fundamentally progressive section of the capitalist class with which the working class can ally to solve the problems facing society.

While the working class will engage in temporary practical action with any force prepared to wage a serious struggle to achieve the goals of the oppressed, all strategies which seek to ally the masses with sections of the ruling class — wage controls, coalition governments with parties of the bourgeoisie, limiting the goals of struggles in colonial countries to capitalist ones — serve only to weaken and finally defeat the struggle.

It is solely the independent fight for their own goals by their own means that the working class and its allies — in colonial countries above all in alliance with the peasantry — which can bring victory.

#### The Labour Lieutenants of Capital

7 The chief organised force within the workers' movement in Britain holding back the struggle against the capitalist class is the bureaucratic leadership of the labour movement. These labour lieutenants of capital attempt at all costs to contain the struggle of the workers within the limits of bourgeois rule and bourgeois democracy, but do not hesitate to hand the working class over to the most vile and barbarous forms of dictatorship if they fear that capitalist rule may be threatened by working class resistance to the ruling class.

In Britain we have had eight Labour governments, all of which have supported cuts in living standards, imperialist wars, racism, attacks on women and a whole array of reactionary policies. The supporters of these Labour leaderships in the trade unions have prevented the labour movement carrying out any serious struggle for the needs of the working class and oppressed.

Their entire record and position in society shows that it is a reactionary and utopian illusion to see a transition to socialism achieved by a Labour government, or that these leaderships will carry out any serious struggle against capitalism. The influence of the bureaucratic leadership of the labour movement over the masses must be totally defeated if the struggle for socialism is to be successful. This struggle involves creating a new revolutionary political

organisation of the working class and building oppositions to the policies and position of the bureaucratic leaders within the trade unions and other mass organisations.

### The Soviet Bureaucracy

8 While the central obstacle to the victory of socialism in Britain is the national and international capitalist system together with the labour bureaucracy tied to the working class, the greatest international aid received by capitalism comes from the bureaucracy of the Soviet Union and similar States. The entire experience of Stalinism in the East has provided the most crucial ideological cement in helping capitalism to maintain its rule.

The system established by Stalin in overturning the principles of the Russian Revolution, murdered the leadership of the Bolshevik Party, and liquidated millions of revolutionaries and workers. It carried out this entire policy in pursuit of its bureaucratic survival and in the framework of the reactionary utopian illusion and policy that socialism can be built in one country.

The Soviet bureaucracy today still exercises a complete monopoly of political power and represses all oppositions and moves for workers' democracy in Russia, the oppressed nations within the Soviet Union, and in Eastern Europe. This bureaucracy subordinates to its own interests of class collaboration with the bourgeoisie all parties throughout the world which follow its line.

The defeat of parties which slavishly follow its line, as well of the 'Euro-communists', who seek to accommodate between the Soviet bureaucracy and the bourgeoisie of their own country, is an indispensable part of the struggle for the overthrow of capitalism.

### Mass Working Class Organisations

9 Despite the reformist and counter-revolutionary character of the Socialist and Communist Parties they differ from all Tory, Liberal, and capitalist 'nationalist' parties in that they—together with the trade unions and other mass formations—remain organisations of the working class. Furthermore a clear distinction has to be made between the reformist leaders of parties such as the Labour Party in Britain or the Communist Party in Italy and the millions of workers who continue to either support or belong to them.

Despite fundamental disagreements

with the policies and leaders of these parties, revolutionaries defend these organisations against ruling class attacks and persistently demand that they break with the interests and organisations of capitalism. Revolutionary socialists fight for united action of all parties and organisations of the working class to defend the interests of the exploited and oppressed.

### The struggle for State power

10 The victory of socialism can only be brought about by the working class winning and holding State power. The capitalist economy, racism, the family, and all forms of social oppression are defended and maintained by the capitalist State. All historical experience (Vietnam, Chile, South Africa) demonstrates that a threatened ruling class will stop at nothing to stay in power. Capitalist leaders are fully prepared to unleash violence and bloody repression against the oppressed.

The military bureaucratic State machine around whichever capitalist State is ultimately based cannot be reformed, or transformed in its class character, or wished out of existence. It has to be encountered, smashed, and replaced by a new State machine based on the oppressed and exploited. The central goal of revolutionary strategy is to secure the means to achieve this.

### The road to victory

11 The victory of socialist revolution in the West can only come about through the creation of a system of workers' democracy which allows the masses to control their lives on every level. A similar system is vital to overthrow the bureaucracies in the USSR and the East.

Such a system of workers' democracy has its first embryos within the organisations of the working class and oppressed. But to confront and destroy ruling class power, and create new institutions of socialist democracy after the revolution, proletarian democracy has to be developed beyond the restrictive confines of the parliamentary system.

Only workers councils representing all sections of the oppressed masses can fulfill such a function. Such a system, to adequately express the interests of the working class and oppressed, must guarantee the right of all political parties which respect the institutions of workers' democracy to function and exist, and must ensure the independence of the trade unions, women's movement,

black and other organisations from the State.

A similar system has to be fought for in the USSR and in all countries under bureaucratic domination. Such a system is the only one which, with the international extension of the revolution, enables the transition to socialist society to occur.

### Consequences of Capitalism

12 The existence of a bureaucratic layer which constitutes the leadership of the labour movement is rooted not in accidental errors of policy, but in the fundamental conditions of imperialist society—and in the case of Stalinist parties in the existence of bureaucratised States such as the USSR.

The ability of the labour bureaucracies to mislead the masses is rooted in the fact that under normal conditions, the mechanisms of the capitalist State based on imperialism continue to dominate society as a whole. These mechanisms systematically prevent the majority of the working class from having a clear grasp of the nature of capitalism.

It is only in periods of mass action and profound crisis of the bourgeois system that the oppressed masses in their majority gain a clear understanding of the system which confronts them and the tasks necessary to overthrow it. If the masses have not been prepared long in advance to go over to a conscious understanding of a revolutionary programme, each wave of action will be diverted by the bureaucratic leaderships of the workers' movement; will recede like previous waves, and will leave behind the crisis of society unresolved.

It is this central struggle for the victory of the working class and the establishment of its political power, involving the fight against the leadership of the labour movement, that requires the building of a revolutionary socialist party. It is this central fight for the creation of working class political power against the policy of the bureaucratic leadership of the labour movement that requires the building of a revolutionary socialist organisation. Such an organisation—to maintain its consistent defence of the interests of the working class, and to be based in the real conditions under which it must act—can only be built through full internal democracy, including the right to form opposition tendencies and factions, and full unity in action.

Given the international character of the class struggle and the revolutionary process itself, such an organisation must seek to build and become part of a revolutionary international.

# THE 'INTERNATIONAL INITIATIVE'

In 'International Communist' 2/3 we published our decision to participate in the 'Necessary International Initiative' discussion framework. In line with that decision we published an 'International Discussion Bulletin' and prepared critical comments on the documents and positions of the other 'NII' groups.

The discussion, however, did not progress. In October 1976 the Spartacusbund proposed that an 'international bureau' be established for the NII — despite the lack of any real programmatic foundation. It became clear that 'international work' in the NII was being used by the Spartacusbund — at least — as an escape from the problems of revolutionary work in their own national arena.

In due course this escapism led to the falling-apart of the Spartacusbund. At that point we felt it necessary to dissociate formally from the 'NII' project and to draw out some conclusions in the following resolution.

The NII no longer exists in the form in which we declared our intention to participate in it — that is a framework for discussion between 4 national groupings. Recent events have destroyed the possibility of the NII being such a framework. The NII — if the title continues to exist — is now nothing more than a front for the FMR. Rather than bolster pretences, the I-CL hereby withdraws from the NII.

In fact the NII has never really existed. The discussion never reached the level of a serious political debate, being more occupied with the organisational jousting incident on short-cut attempts to 'build an international tendency'; and what political debate there was, has been reduced to meaninglessness by the instability and lack of responsibility to the immediate class struggle of the Spartacusbund.

The NII was a project of a structured framework predicated on pretences disproportionate to the reality of the participating organisations and to its inadequate and insubstantial platform (to which the I-CL produced 'neutralising' amendments before affiliating). This structure helped de-focus attention from political discussion and engendered manoeuvres rather than discussion.

The speed with which the former majority of the Spartacusbund converted its perception of the objective need to construct an international tendency into an auto-conversion to the entire platform of the FMR has rendered discussion impossible — and, for those comrades, apparently superfluous.

Propelled by the search for a solution to their own national problems, the Spartacusbund IT are joining with the FMR in a hastily-contrived 'international tendency' which can have no future, because it has a weak or simply wrong political basis. Far from demonstrating the internationalism of the Spartacusbund-IT, this haste and this lack of interest in organising a responsible discussion is rooted in the search for a *deus ex machina* to solve their national problems.

From the beginning there was a built-in contradiction in the NII because of the pretensions of the FMR to being an international tendency: a contradiction which is now resolving itself. The platform of the FMR cannot be a basis for an adequate international tendency: to judge from its sections on the FI and on the method of the transitional programme, it consists of nothing more than glib permutations of the notions of the USFI and of the "anti-Pabloites".

The FMR and the Spartacusbund-IT are setting out to join the ranks of the sects who reckon to solve the epochal problems of our moment by facile pen-work and juggling with formulas.

The I-CL believes that it remains necessary to re-create the programmatic basis for a revolutionary communist International. Unlike the comrades who raise the slogan, "Reconstruct the FI", we do not think that what we have to build is already defined and mapped out. The problem is that we have to reconstruct the answer to the question: what, politically, is the International? — that is, reconstruct the international programme.

The I-CL will continue to seek international dialogue with other tendencies as part of the work of doing this.

Political Committee of the I-CL. 15 July 1977.

# A bold tactical compromise

*FROM THE PROGRAMMATIC DECLARATION OF THE INTERNATIONALE KOMMUNISTISCHE LIGA OF AUSTRIA*

## WORKERS' GOVERNMENT AND UNITED FRONT

"The slogan of the workers' government is no more the equivalent of the dictatorship of the proletariat than the slogan of workers' control of production is the same as socialism".

(Die Internationale, monthly theoretical journal of the KPD, 15.12.1922)

"The slogan 'workers' and farmers' government' is thus acceptable to us only in the sense that it had in 1917 with the Bolsheviks, i.e. as an anti-bourgeois and anti-capitalist slogan, but in no case in that 'democratic' sense which later the epigones gave it, transforming it from a bridge to socialist revolution into the chief barrier upon its path". (The Transitional programme)

After the ebb of the revolutionary tide after the war, the defeats in Germany, Poland and Hungary, the world communist movement began a discussion of tactical and programmatic questions which centred on the united front and the related slogan of the Workers' Government and also on the significance of transitional demands.

Outside Russia the revolutionary parties showed themselves in practice too weak to lead the masses that surged forward towards the conquest of power. Reformism — in the guise of the social-democracy — was able to save its political life and along with that the bourgeois state. With the ebbing of this revolutionary tide the workers were not — to paraphrase Trotsky — 'less revolutionary' so much as 'more cautious'. The faith of millions of workers in reformism then as now did not express the refusal of these workers to struggle for any real improvements but rather than their illusions that these improvements could be just as easily achieved within the framework of 'democracy'.

The path of civil war seems too dangerous and uncertain.

For the communists there now arose the necessity — without yielding to opportunist pressures — of taking this consciousness into account in their tactics, of finding ways to the masses that would make it possible for the communist party to demonstrate in practice that it alone represented a solution. Thus simply to counterpose to bourgeois democracy the dictatorship of the proletariat was and is just as inadequate and incorrect as limiting oneself to propagandist exposures of the treachery of the reformists. Doing both was and is an integral part of revolutionary politics; but the tactics of communists amount to more than the repetition of 'eternal truths'.

If revolutionaries do not succeed in leading the masses (or sections of them) to experiences, they will remain a propaganda club (in the negative sense of the word).

The tactics of the united front and the Workers' Government are inextricably bound up with the 'system of transitional demands' which in the imperialist epoch of capitalism represents the only true alternative for the working class. However, tactical methods are not universal, their application always depends on the existence of certain situations of the class struggle.

To use the tactics of the united front and the Workers' Government outside of such a situation, to fail to take into account the change in the relation of forces between the classes, can mean that the party that makes this mistake becomes objectively the servant of reaction. The most recent events in Portugal — we shall return to these later — show this in all clarity.

The strategic goal of the communists remains in any case the achievement of the greatest possible unity of the working class and its taking power by establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat. But to go into a room one usually has to walk through the entrance hall. In very exceptional cases one might go straight through the wall — but then one must have the strength to break it down.

Our present-day discussions of these tactical questions are conducted in the knowledge that revolutionary politics (above all in Austria and Germany) are not today a matter of leading

masses of workers in struggle. But we do not conclude from that that a revolutionary propaganda group (or rather, a nucleus that is struggle for the development of such a group) must eschew tactical measures. Such an approach would lead to the propaganda nucleus remaining at the first stage of party building, and in the final analysis would lead to its degeneration into sectarian rigidity.

It is our duty to specify exactly which tactics can be applied under which conditions. If we discuss the Workers' Government today and refer back to the discussions at the 4th Congress of the Communist International and the conflicts in the KPD, we must keep clearly in our minds that at the stage of party development then the direct participation of certain communist parties in a Workers' Government (or Workers' and Peasants Government) stood on the order of the day as did the real possibility (because of the mass influence of those parties) of the creation of the workers' united front. If we remind ourselves that the tactics of the united front came under the general heading of the slogan "class against class" then we will not lose sight of the fact that today we cannot be the active carriers of the united front of the working class. But this in no way means that the conclusions the sections of the Communist International came to in their discussions have become irrelevant to us today.

Nevertheless, if the split of the working class into a reformist and a revolutionary wing (expressed in the existence of social-democratic and communist parties) was a fact facing the comrades of the Communist International, the degeneration of this International and later the passing over of the Stalinist movement into the camp of reformism has meant that in many countries the reformist camp within the working class is split into two wings. The politics of these two wings are not qualitatively different, yet — because of the differences in their development and their ties — they often stand on opposite sides of the barricades without either representing the independent interests of the working class. In addition to these parties there is also the still unresolved crisis of proletarian leadership so dramatically demonstrated in the destruction of the Fourth International in World War 2.

What this amounts to is that when we discuss tactical problems like the united front and the Workers' Government we must not only take into account the level of the class struggle and its perspectives but equally the stage of party building at which we find ourselves.

### ALL POWER TO THE SOVIETS

After April 1917 the Bolsheviks were faced with the fact that the organs of dual power — the soviets — were led by the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries. In other words, they were led by reformism while the Bolsheviks represented a minority in the soviets. The masses of workers and peasants organised in the soviets wanted power, even if inadequate experience did not permit them to grasp the political character of the parties they voted for. Merely making propaganda about the betrayals of the reformists would never have made it possible for the masses to pass over to the side of the revolutionaries. Only the Bolsheviks, raising the slogan of "All Power to the Soviets!" were able to open up for the millions of workers and peasants the perspectives of the conquest of power, which, on account of certain special circumstances, could for a certain period of time have been accomplished peacefully.

In his "Letter(s) from Afar", Lenin characterises the soviets thus: "Side by side with this government — which as regards the present war is but the agent of the billion-dollar 'firm' 'England and France' — there has arisen the chief, unofficial, as yet undeveloped and comparatively weak Workers' Government, which expresses the interests of the proletariat and of the entire poor section of the urban and rural population. This is the Soviet of Workers' Deputies in Petrograd, which is seeking connections with the soldiers and peasants, and also with the agricultural workers, with the latter particularly and primarily, of course, more than with the peasants." (Collected Works vol.23 p.304).

The soviets thus were nothing less than the 'nucleus of a new state power' — namely that of the proletariat, but still within the framework of the — disintegrating — bourgeois state. But they were led by reformists. With all the peculiarities of the Russian Revolution we see here the whole complexity of the great leaps in the development of proletarian consciousness in the epoch of imperialism, which is the precondition for the successful application by the revolutionary party of these tactics.

Formally the workers and peasants still voted for the reformists, but in their daily actions they were already going beyond the limits of the bourgeois state and thereby beyond the limits of reformism. The seizure of power by the soviets would have enormously hastened the proletarian dictatorship, though it would not have constituted in itself the dictatorship.

Does the slogan "All Power to the Soviets" perhaps simply mean a coalition government of Mensheviks and SRs? Not at all! "The slogan, 'Power to the Soviets', however is very often,

if not in most cases, taken quite incorrectly to mean a 'Cabinet of the parties of the Soviet majority'. We would like to go into more detail on this very false notion. A 'Cabinet of the parties of the Soviet majority' means a change of individual ministers, with the entire old government apparatus left intact — a thoroughly bureaucratic and thoroughly undemocratic apparatus incapable of carrying out serious reforms, such as are contained even in the Socialist Revolutionaries and Menshevik programmes. 'Power to the Soviets' means radically reshaping the old state apparatus, that bureaucratic apparatus which hampers everything democratic. It means removing this apparatus and substituting for it a new, popular one, ie, a truly democratic apparatus of Soviets, ie, the organised and armed majority of the people — the workers, soldiers and peasants." (Lenin Collected Works vol 25 p.371 — One of the Fundamental Questions of the Revolution).

We quote Lenin extensively because crucial questions are raised here that later become central to the discussion of the question of the Workers' Government. First of all, it is made clear that the Workers' Government is more than the mere replacement of one (bourgeois) government by another (reformist or revolutionary/reformist) one: it rests on the armed might of the workers and soldiers. Secondly Lenin takes as his starting point the reforms that are contained in the programme of the reformists, reforms that the masses are prepared to fight for and that can only be realised in opposition to the bourgeoisie. It is not a simply a matter of counterposing to the programme of the reformists the revolutionary programme as if to say, "Bow the head in recognition". No: the reforms of the reformist programme are taken as a point of departure. Even if we take into account all the peculiarities of the Russian Revolution, we are still left with the principal outlines of revolutionary tactics in the imperialist epoch.

In 'The Impending Catastrophe and How to Combat It', Lenin spells out the programme of a Workers' and Peasants' Government. Starting from the most urgent needs of the masses he exposes the class collaboration of the reformists. When Lenin calls the achievement of this programme (of a "revolutionary democracy") a "step in the direction of socialism" what he has in mind is no way — as the Stalinists claim — a separate 'intermediate stage', but the transition to the dictatorship of the proletariat. But this already shows how pointless and scholastic it is to counterpose the dictatorship of the proletariat to the Workers' Government.

The refusal of the reformists to take power does not in the least alter the educational value of the slogan. 'Nevertheless, the demand of the Bolsheviks, addressed to the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries: 'Break with the bourgeoisie, take the power into your own hands!' had for the masses tremendous educational significance. The obstinate unwillingness of the Mensheviks and the Socialist Revolutionaries to take power, so dramatically exposed during the July Days, definitely doomed them before mass opinion and prepared the victory of the Bolsheviks'.

#### TRANSITIONAL PROGRAMME, UNITED FRONT AND WORKERS' GOVERNMENT

"The readiness of the Communist Party to form a workers' government together with the social-democrats is not based on the promises of the reformist leaders, but on the party's assessment of the general political situation, of the fighting spirit of the masses, the perspectives for this struggle, the relation of forces between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat and the capacity of one's own party to beat down the resistance of the reformist bureaucracy and the possibility of its leading the masses in the struggle for their demands."

(August Kleine: The Struggle for the Workers' Government and the danger of opportunism 'Die Internationale': 1.2.23)

After the defeat in a number of countries and the relative economic and political stabilisation of the bourgeoisie, the 3rd and 4th Congresses of the Communist International carried out against the supporters of the "theory of the offensive" the 'strategic turn' of the United Front policy.

At the time, the struggle for power was not on the order of the day, the European working class stood dispirited and disorientated in the face of the political offensive of the bourgeoisie, which in the final analysis also threatened the Social Democracy. The propaganda and agitation for the unity of the Social Democratic workers and the Communist workers — without slurring over the differences — was now the central issue in the political work of the Communists. Without this unity in practical struggle, in the factory, in the city districts, the ruling class offensive could not be beaten back.

The slogan of the workers' government opened up to the disorientated workers the perspective of the seizure of power. The Social Democracy — under the pressure of the working class — was forced to take up in its own programme anti-capitalist demands without for a

*single moment having the intention of fighting for their realisation.*

Yet it was precisely this that provided a point of departure. The task of the moment was not to make abstract propaganda for the dictatorship of the proletariat (though this, of course, as always was the communists' goal and was not kept a secret), but to make propaganda for class independence, for a government of the working class, a government whose programme represents the most urgent needs of the proletariat and which takes practical steps to satisfy them and this relies upon the workers.

The social-democratic worker had faith in 'democracy', he felt the dictatorship of the proletariat was superfluous. Still, he was prepared to struggle alongside the Communists against the capitalist offensive. He did not know that while his leaders inveighed against the 'inhumanity of capitalism' they were really completely absorbed with parliamentary trickery, with 'deals', with the leaders of the bourgeoisie. It is as inadequate today as it was then to declare: "Scheidemann (or Kreisky, Marchais, Berlinguer etc) is a traitor". Of course, all of them are traitors; of themselves they are not worth a moment's consideration. The 'ridiculous' thing is simply that millions of workers still have faith in them.

Irrespective of which question constitutes the focus of the struggle for the proletarian united front — opposition to unemployment, inflation or the threat of fascism — the slogan of the workers' government opens up for the workers in struggle the perspective of political power. That does not by any means imply that it is a cure-all. But defensive and offensive are not mutually exclusive in the movement of war any more than in the class struggle. Revolutionary parties need tactical methods which prepare the political offensive.

The experience of the class struggles in the imperialist epoch shows that to safeguard its economic existence the working class must break with bourgeois legality (this is valid, of course, only for the epoch as a whole — not for every individual part of it). It must counterpose to the written and unwritten laws of the bourgeois economic and political order its own and implement them in struggle. It is precisely at this point that we see the close relationship between the tactic of the united front, the workers' government and the 'system of transitional demands'. The struggle against unemployment can only be successfully prosecuted if it sets out to reenlist the unemployed in the ranks of employed workers. But it is just at this point that the workers break with the bourgeois order and counterpose to it their own system. The struggle against fascism, for instance, cannot be seriously waged without the workers being armed: the bourgeois monopoly of arms is broken. The working class must thus organise the embryonic forms of its own armed power while still on the terrain of the bourgeois state. For every one of these aims, however, the greatest possible unity of the proletariat is necessary, just as all these struggles are bound to end in defeat if not connected with the perspective of the seizure of power. But this perspective cannot be in the forefront so long as the majority of the workers still believe in 'Democracy'.

"It would be of enormous significance for the revolution — even if we do not succeed in making these workers Communists straight away — if, however, we managed to mobilise the workers by relating to their own needs and by making clear propaganda for a workers' government and against a government of coalition with the bourgeoisie using at first their illusions in parliament and their own organisations (trade unions, works councils, workers' councils) and if then the workers who in their own minds are still on the terrain of the bourgeois democracy and within its constitutional relations, put these organisations at the service of the class struggle". (Brandler: The Current Tasks of the Party, Die Internationale 6.1.23).

Thus when the working class begins to organise the proletarian dictatorship while bourgeois democracy still exists — this, of course, can only happen in struggle — the slogan of the workers' government becomes the very heart of the 'system of transitional demands'.

But as with all tactics, in this case too there are opportunist dangers. For a start, neither the tactic of the united front nor that of the workers' government is appropriate at all times. Of course, in their propaganda revolutionaries will always emphasise the necessary unity of the working class and the perspective of the seizure of power. The crux of the matter, however, is how this unity is to come about and how the working class comes to take power. In short, the problem is, in which situation do we focus on this tactic as the immediate slogan of the moment.

To have proposed a united front to the German Social Democracy in January 1919 would have meant making an offer to the counter-revolution of working with it. This is not a moral question. We know that Social Democracy and Stalinism will betray the working class in every situation, but this betrayal — precisely because both parties are under the pressure of the workers and because in the final analysis both are also threatened by bourgeois counter-revolution — takes on different forms and it is just such differences we must exploit. Those who do not understand that there is an immense difference between the politics of Noske and the

Caballero wing of the Spanish SP deserve to vanish from the stage of politics. To be sure, both are reformists — under certain circumstances Caballero can even be more dangerous than Noske — yet the correct tactical utilisation of the specific forms of reformist parties determines no less a thing than the fate of the proletariat. It would not be very marxist to formulate precisely the 'eternal' conditions for the application of a tactic. The first question we must ask ourselves is what are the national and international perspectives for the class struggle. Secondly we must make a concrete analysis of the politics of the reformists; and finally, thirdly, we must take into account the strength and implantation of our own organisation.

In a situation where reformism has become the main force of the counter-revolution, where it actively undertakes the smashing of the proletarian vanguard, propaganda for a workers' government would be propaganda for the counter-revolution. But that does not necessarily apply to both reformist camps.

Such a situation existed in the summer of 1975 in Portugal, where the Social Democracy became the spearhead of the 'democratic counter-revolution'. Its aim was the destruction of the workers' vanguard and the establishment of a functioning bourgeois democracy. But this workers' vanguard also stood in the camp of reformism or semi-reformist (CP and centrists) that was itself the target of the Social Democracy's attack. To have said at such a time that both are reformist and neither represent the class independence of the proletariat would have been the peak of political idiocy. Unity, of course, had to be sought in this situation with the social democratic workers too, but this was not possible under the slogan of 'For a CP-SP government'. Above all it was a matter of resisting the attacks on the workers' vanguard and on the rank and file of the CP without accepting the slightest political responsibility for the politics of this tendency.

The tactic of the united front and the workers' government is thus not related to particular parties; it is not the revolutionaries' ultimatum to the development of the class struggle. In general all that can be said as to its application is that it is dependent on a situation in which reformism (or a reformist trend with mass influence) has an objective interest in the struggle against the capitalist offensive. This stipulation will not free a revolutionary party from the task of having to analyse each situation concretely.

One cannot determine in advance therefore in which form or through which slogans of the working class the struggle for the workers' government will be brought about and what political context it will have.

Various factors — war, outbreak of revolution in the imperialist countries — might see to it that the unity of the proletariat does not come about except under the leadership of a revolutionary mass party, that the reformists will sink into complete insignificance within a few days. The same factors might create a situation where the workers' government has the same significance as the dictatorship of the proletariat. Revolutionary tactics can never be extrapolated beyond a definite situation without the party that does that becoming a break on the revolution.

A revolutionary party that sets its sights unconditionally on the establishment of the workers' government as the indispensable transition to the dictatorship of the proletariat will irresistably fall into right opportunism. There is no less a danger of 'infantile leftism' that in its concern for 'purity' of doctrine blocks off its road to the masses.

"The slogan of the workers' government is a necessary orientating slogan, a slogan that gives to the united front its unifying objective. The moment the workers find themselves fighting together for the workers' government, workers' control of production, will signal the beginning of our counter-offensive. For when we are not merely defending what we have, what we are losing but are fighting for new positions, then we are on the offensive." (Radek: 4th Congress of the Communist International)

## WORKERS' GOVERNMENT OR DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT

"We must make it clear what a workers' government is and what it is not. It is not — and I need say no more on this — participation of Communists in a Social Democratic cabinet; but it is also not the dictatorship of the proletariat". (Brandler: The current tasks of our party)

At the 4th Congress of the Communist International differences arose which came out above all in the debate between Zinoviev, the President of the International, and members of the German section.

Zinoviev's position on the question of the workers' government was extremely contradictory. Quite rightly he emphasised against the right opportunist tendencies that even if a workers' government were established "civil war could not be avoided". Thus Zinoviev

correctly saw the possibility of misunderstanding the workers' government as a 'progressive' parliamentary combination representing a stage which one must inevitably pass through before arriving at the dictatorship of the proletariat. What was contradictory—in fact wrong—about his position was that on the one hand he saw the workers' government as a slogan to be used as a "synonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat", while on the other hand stipulating four 'types of workers' government' (which did not exclude there being even more types). In practice he robbed the slogan of any transitional dynamic. The first type he calls 'bourgeois workers' government' by which he means a liberal party ruling on its own. A Social Democratic government he sees as a second type of workers' government and a coalition of Social Democrats, independents and trade union leaders ("perhaps even Communists") constitute his third type. His idea of a genuine workers' government is thus the government of the dictatorship of the proletariat (fourth type). This 'genuine workers' government' is in Zinoviev's eyes a synonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The experience of class struggles has shown that it is completely meaningless and wrong to set up such a schema of workers' governments. The slogan loses thereby its entire force and degenerates into a typology—and a wrong one at that. Precisely the experiences of the last decade show that the Social Democratic parties governing alone can quite easily be—in a particular period—a more effective government for the bourgeoisie than the traditional bourgeois parties. To declare the governments in Austria, Sweden, Britain or Germany (the last being a type lying between Zinoviev's first and second categories) to be workers' governments—albeit not genuine ones—or anything of the sort would rob this tactic of its entire content and discredit revolutionaries.

What is far more interesting however is the second aspect of Zinoviev's position—using the workers' government as a synonym for the dictatorship of the proletariat. That way the slogan is supposed to help educate, make it easier to relate to the consciousness of the masses. Of course, the slogan of the workers' government does possess a great deal of educational value—but in a completely different sense. For Zinoviev (who incidentally had a completely ultimatist position on the seizure of power) the whole thing appears in the end as a 'trick'. Because the masses of the Social Democratic workers still believe in 'democracy' the communists paraphrase their goal as a workers' government. After the victory the workers will realise that they had actually been fighting for the dictatorship of the proletariat. In a certain sense, of course, this is perfectly right, except that what has been lost on the way is the conception of the workers' government as that part of the system of transitional demands that focusses on the seizure of power. The ultimatum is paraphrased. In passing we might add that this makes it easy for the reformist leaders to expose the 'dishonesty' of the communists.

In his quite justifiable concern that the application of this tactic should not lead to rightward deviations, to accommodation to the social-democrats, Zinoviev took an ultimatist, left opportunist position. He misses completely the educational value of this tactic.

Zinoviev's schema was formulated in the theses of the 4th World Congress of the Communist International. This in no way changes the fact that we accept the method that is expressed in these theses on the workers' government as valid. But on the basis of the experience since the 4th World Congress of the Communist International (1922) we must reject this typology of different workers' governments.

We understand the slogan of the workers' government and the problems that arise in its application above all in the context of a system of transitional demands. Of course, the government of the dictatorship of the proletariat is also a workers' government. But saying this is banal and misses the heart of the revolutionary tactic and the question as to whether and how the consciousness of the working class determines the revolutionary programme.

We thus also consider it confusing and meaningless to speak of two 'types' of workers' government, that is, one that arises within the framework of capitalism and one that is nothing other than the popular expression of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The workers' government is not the same as the dictatorship of the proletariat. It is to the same degree and in the same way as the slogan of workers' control is the same as socialism. The anonymous author of the article in "Die Internationale" that we quoted at the beginning brilliantly stated the entire problematic in a single sentence. Trotsky writes in his articles discussing the transitional programme that the "sliding scale of wages and hours" is nothing other than the methods of work of a socialist society.

But the struggle for these begins on the terrain of bourgeois society. Nor can we exclude that there might be a realisation of this slogan even before the seizure of power. What is decisive is that without the conquest of political power these gains of the workers will be destroyed within a short time by the counterrevolution. Thus the immense importance of the slogan of the workers' government in the context of a system of

transitional demands. The workers' government is not to be counterposed to the dictatorship of the proletariat, but it can be the transition to it. Only in this context can revolutionaries use this slogan. The content of the propaganda for the workers' government must take as its starting point the most urgent needs of the oppressed masses. In the fight back against the capitalist offensive these might be at the level of wages, prices and rents, but likewise at the level of the struggle against the impending fascist danger.

The workers' government is not a parliamentary combination as Bandler correctly affirmed, but a government of struggle. It must base itself on organs of struggle (soviets, trade unions etc) though it would be wrong to make propaganda for this government dependent on the existence already of these organs. These can and must arise in the struggle itself, but already existing organisational forms can also be developed to solve the tasks posed. But the workers' government will also utilise parliament for its purposes, precisely because the workers' government bases itself on workers who also still have faith in 'democracy'. This dialectical interrelation of utilisation of parliamentary possibilities and the development of the embryonic forms of workers' power will transform the workers' government into a regime of dual power.

"Whether we become the government as a result of civil war, or whether we get there because of the retreat of the bourgeoisie, civil war is the result of the workers' government. The working class will not be able to hold onto power without civil war" ... "Where a workers' government comes into existence it provides the point of departure for the struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat..." (Radek 4th World Congress of the Communist International).

Thus the workers' government is everything but a comfortable lead-up to the dictatorship of the proletariat. On the contrary it represents the possibility of taking up the struggle for power even while sections of militant workers are still under the hegemony of the reformist and semi-reformist leaders. It will either represent a transition to the dictatorship of the proletariat or it will not come about at all, as Radek put it in his excellent contribution to the 4th World Congress of the Communist International that every sectarian should read. From this it follows that one of the most important tasks of this government is the arming of the working class.

To sum up, we must stipulate the following relationship between the workers' government and the dictatorship of the proletariat:

1. The two are not identical; the workers' government (whatever concrete form it might have) is one possible transitional step to the dictatorship of the proletariat, without in itself representing an independent intermediate stage.
2. The slogan of the workers' government is the apex of the system of transitional demands in that it focusses the working class's struggles for its social and political existence on the question of the seizure of power.
3. Communists use the demagogic 'anti-capitalist' demands in the programmes of the reformists and/or centrists as a point of departure and link these to their own transitional demands and the slogan of the workers' government. By doing this they in no way hide the fact that they are also of the opinion that only the dictatorship of the proletariat will completely solve the problems of the oppressed masses.
4. They do not counterpose themselves ultimatively to the workers under reformist and centrist influence, but declare their readiness to build a united front with the reformists and /or centrists not only at workplace level but also at the level of government, so long as these parties are actually moving towards solving the needs of the masses.
5. The precondition for the creation of such a government is the preparedness of the working class to build its own organs, independent of the bourgeoisie, and the preparedness of the reformists and centrists to arm the workers, or, to be exact, to tolerate the arming of the workers, to recognise the developing (or already developed) working class organs as the counterpower to bourgeois parliament, and to base themselves on these organs.
6. Even when they participate in such a government, communists must preserve their complete political independence. Even when they are forced to participate in a workers' government, the reformist leaders will never stop trying to disorientate and confuse the workers. Nevertheless, this practical proof as to who really does represent the interests of the working class will give enormous impetus to the passing of the workers over to the side of the communists.

"Precisely because the workers' government is not yet the dictatorship of the proletariat but only a government of workers' parties that base themselves on extra-parliamentary organs of struggle, it is inevitable that its policies will fluctuate. These fluctuations can lead to its defeat and to a new bourgeois rule, if the communist party does not know how to show the broad masses the ineffectiveness of democratic methods of struggle against bourgeois violence, sabotage, counterrevolution, bourgeois resistance aided by international and dom-

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estic conspiracies; or if the communist party does not understand that it must conquer the confidence of the broad masses before it can assume the leadership of their struggle against the bourgeoisie. While the workers' government can arise within the framework of bourgeois democracy, it can only ensure its existence by going beyond this framework. A communist should never forget that." (A. Kleine "The Struggle for the Workers' Government and the Danger of Opportunism" — Die Internationale 1-2 1923).

7. The communists do not approach the question of the workers' government ultimatively. That means they cannot make such a government's acceptance of their full programme as a precondition. The workers' government would then be superfluous. The precondition for such a government coming into existence is the practical prosecution of the solution to the most pressing problems of the masses.

8. One cannot determine bureaucratically whether a workers' government will arise. In every case it will be the transition to civil war and to the dictatorship of the proletariat. Though the government of this dictatorship will not necessarily be composed only of communists. The workers' government will then, however, change from being one of dual power to being one of proletarian power.

"Is the creation of such a government by the traditional workers' parties possible? Past experience shows, as has already been stated, that this is to say the least highly improbable. However, one cannot categorically deny in advance the theoretical possibility that, under the influence of completely exceptional circumstances (war, defeat, financial crash, mass revolutionary pressure etc) the petty-bourgeois parties including the Stalinists may go further than they themselves wish along the road to a break with the bourgeoisie. In any case one thing is not to be doubted: even if this highly improbable variant somewhere at some time becomes a reality and the 'workers' and farmers' government' in the above-mentioned sense is established in fact, it would represent merely a short episode on the road to the actual dictatorship of the proletariat (Transitional Programme, Pathfinder edition p.95).

It must be seen as extremely improbable that the reformists or centrists could be forced to break with the bourgeoisie without coming under the pressure of a mass revolutionary party. Only the situation of a massive fight-back by the working class that in parts already bases itself on the revolutionary programme, of the united front of these workers with other sections of the class, could establish the preconditions for a transitional government.

Here it is not a matter of assuming that the reformist leaders will suddenly be 'converted' and foreswear class collaboration, or that the centrist leaders will suddenly become unwavering revolutionaries no longer constantly swinging like a pendulum between the poles. It is simply a matter of understanding that these leaders can under certain circumstances be forced to go further than they want. The fight-back that goes more and more onto the offensive against capital, the united front of this struggle, in which the revolutionary party — de facto — has the leadership, can and will create the conditions either for the systematic mass splits from them. Naturally it is not only the objective course of events that will force the reformist and centrist leaders to go further than they want, but the combination of this factor with the politics of the revolutionary party.

The reformist leaders will always try to save the bourgeois state. We know that. The only important question is how, in that way they do it. We know that these people will never agree to the creation of a workers' government because they are out to save the neck of the bourgeoisie. But when a Largo Caballero speaks of the need to arm the working class, how should the Bolshevik Party answer? Is it with the words, "You are and you always will be a reformist and even now you are trying to deceive the workers." This would — we hope — constitute the last statement such a party ever made.

No. When the revolutionary party daily gains ground, when the civil war begins to make its appearance while the workers who still have confidence in the reformists nevertheless stand side by side with the communist workers in their daily struggles, the reformist leaders will try to save whatever can be saved. To say in such a situation "You are only prepared to participate in a workers' government the better to carry out further betrayals" would drive those workers breaking with reformism on the basis of their daily experiences back into their arms by giving these leaders the perfect opportunity of 'proving' the 'dishonesty' of the communists. This way the unfortunate revolutionaries will have succeeded in breathing life back into the corpse again.

"The reformist leaders will try repeatedly in the course of the struggle to capitulate by means of compromises, by means of a 'cautious' line, to the bourgeoisie threatening a civil war..."

"Menshevism is hostile to the revolution, it knows full well what it means, it understands its significance. Nevertheless Menshevism loses its head when its bourgeois partner prepares

to throw it out of the driving seat and it sees the extra-parliamentary movement grow massively. It then begins to decompose into its ten component parts — Ledebour, Rosenfeld people, Fellisch folk etc. all the way down to Noske and Hilferding — just so that the masses might be held back". (A.Kleine).

### THE SECTION ON THE WORKERS' GOVERNMENT FROM THE DRAFT PROGRAMME OF THE GERMAN COMMUNIST PARTY [7.10.22]

In the period when the independent mass movement of the proletariat has reached a certain height and breadth, when its opposition to the bourgeoisie and to the workers' leaders tied to them sharpens, but while the proletariat in its majority is still not ready to break with the bourgeois democracy, the slogan of the Workers' Government is the appropriate slogan for opening up a new stage in the process of breaking the hold of the bourgeoisie over the proletarian masses and for reaching a new, higher point of departure for the movement heading in the direction of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

The slogan of the Workers' Government embraces not only the demand that the tops of the reformist workers' movement should break with the bourgeoisie, but, above all, it also involves the creation of new bases of proletarian power in and through the masses themselves and the smashing of the bases of power of the bourgeoisie. The decisive power base of the Workers' Government must be the armed proletarians, its essential political base must be the councils of workers' and small farmers' deputies.

Based on the armed workers and the workers' councils, the Workers' Government disarms the bourgeoisie, destroys its organisational connections and dismisses the bourgeois elements in the existing state machine.

The stage of the Workers' Government corresponds to a series of revolutionary transitional measures in the sphere of economics and finance; these will be different according to the situations in the different countries.

These transitional measures formally belong still to the framework of bourgeois relations of property and production and the bourgeois system of finance. But they already amount to attacks by the proletarian state power organised as a Workers' Government on the right of the capitalists to dispose of their wealth and a conscious and single-minded attempt in the interests of the proletariat and the broad working masses to place restrictions on capitalism's drive for profit.

For Germany and a series of other countries the following are the sort of transitional measures appropriate in this case:

- (1) State participation in all big capitalist enterprises (Erfassung der Sachwerte) and the use those company profits accruing to the state for the alleviation of the tax burdens falling on the broad masses (indirect, trading and income tax).
- (2) State syndicalisation or trustification of capitalist companies that the state participates in with determining control in the hands of the economic organisations of the workers and employees, the shop stewards and trade unions (workers' control of production).
- (3) To this purpose abolition of bank and commercial secrecy and likewise of secrecy in the realm of production techniques.
- (4) State monopoly of food and rationing — again determining control being in the hands of the organisations of the workers, employees and small farmers.
- (5) State monopoly of foreign trade and banking — once again with the determining control being placed in the hands of the organisations of the workers and employees.

All these transitional measures are — while formally within the framework of bourgeois property relations — in actual fact in stark contradiction to the interests of the capitalist class; they can only be implemented by the sharpest, broadest struggle against the bourgeoisie. The determined and systematic resistance of the bourgeoisie will necessarily force the Workers' Government to go beyond these contradictory, half-way measures and replace the partial confiscation of bourgeois property and the mere limitation on the capitalists' right to dispose of their wealth with the complete removal of bourgeois ownership of the means of production (raw materials etc) and complete abolition of the capitalists' right of disposal.

The Workers' Government will be forced to take this additional step by the inevitable fact that the capitalists will try to use what right of disposal they still have to wage a determined,

inexorable, treacherous war against the economic order of the Workers' Government in order to disorganise and sabotage it.

But the capitalists will also use every element of the bourgeois state apparatus that still exists under the Workers' Government in order to use it as a base for organising and directing a political struggle against the Workers' Government: parliament, the courts, the armed forces, the civil service, the press, educational system, the church etc.

In the course of these struggles, the Workers' Government will be forced, in order to maintain its existence, to transcend its dual, its contradictory political form and go on to smash the state machine formally too and transfer to the workers' councils the entire state power.

The co-existence for a period of bourgeois parliamentary democracy and soviets, as forces engaged in a life and death struggle, is an inevitable stage in the transition from bourgeois democracy to the proletarian dictatorship.

Whether the Workers' Government, the last stage imaginable prior to soviet rule, is realised or leapt over cannot be determined in advance. Just as one cannot determine in advance whether state capitalist measures in the interests of the working class will be a transitional stage that will last a certain length of time.

But this does not stop Communists, so long as the majority of the working class is not yet ready to go over immediately to setting up soviet rule and socialism, from considering seriously and systematically the last possible stages prior to soviet rule and socialism.

If these stages are jumped over — because of the determined resistance of the bourgeoisie and the cowardly indecision of their social democratic lackeys — so much the worse for the bourgeoisie.

#### **THE PROGRAMME OF THE GERMAN COMMUNIST PARTY FOR THE WORKERS' GOVERNMENT IN SAXONY [NOV. 1922]**

1. The working population must be supplied with food and the necessities of daily life. In particular: bread, potatoes and coal at lower prices. All state enterprises (agricultural, mining and fuel industries) to be mobilised in the fight to meet the needs of the working population.

2. In order to obtain the required means: immediate imposition of taxes on the owners and legislation of a compulsory levy amounting to the value of 30% of their holdings.

3. Supply of adequate living quarters; confiscation of luxury dwellings and all not fully utilised living space.  
Abrogation of any laws preventing this.

Refusal to permit any reduction of the economic activity of companies by the syndicates in the building materials industry and confiscation of all units of production not being fully utilised for the production of cheap building materials for house building.

4. Strengthening of the law securing the 8 Hour Day.

Raising the level of production by introducing universal labour conscription for all of sound health between the ages of 18 and 58.

Legalisation of workers' control from above by the organs of the state and from below by the workers themselves in order to stop sabotage of production, profiteering by inflating prices and partial and total closure of companies.

5. Immediate promulgation of an amnesty for those found guilty of political crimes, crimes arising out of poverty and offences against sections 218 and 219 of the law of Saxony — with the exception of counter-revolutionaries.

6. Immediate banning of the TENO in Saxony.

7. For a police force and administration composed of workers and employees organised in free trade unions. The setting up of a workers' militia.

8. Immediate illegalisation under penalty of the harshest penal measures of every monarchist of anti-republican agitation in word, picture, or writing. Immediate disbandment of all monarchist or anti-republican associations.

Unconditional removal of all justice, police and administrative officials that are not prepared to support the republican regime unconditionally.

9. The government must submit all drafts of laws connected with the interests of the working class to plenary sessions of workers' delegates and the periodic state-wide congresses of workers' delegates.

10. The most important task of the Workers' Government in Saxony is to mobilise the masses against the dead-end bankrupt politics of coalition and to take up the struggle for a Workers' Government throughout the country on the basis of a clear programme covering all the domestic and foreign questions facing the German republic.

# THE REVOLUTIONARY PROGRAMME

IN THIS issue of 'International Communist' we follow up the discussion on the question of the revolutionary programme already opened in IC 2/3, in IC 4, and in our Manifesto [IC 6]. We publish an article on the Workers' Government question from the Internationale Kommunistische Liga of Austria, and two documents from the Communist International's programmatic discussions.

The Workers' Government article is not an I-CL document, and we do not necessarily agree with every nuance in it. Nonetheless it is in our opinion an admirably clear critical exposition of the early debates on the Workers' Government (part of which we reproduced in IC4). Its main limitation is that it tends to rest within the bounds of an academic analysis of texts. But analysis of texts as rich as those of the early Communist International is far from being a bad starting point for communists today.

The first of the two documents reproduced from the Communist International is an excerpt from a resolution at the Third Congress where the method of **transitional demands** is defined. For vulgar Trotskyism transitional demands are often seen as ingenious political devices thought up by Trotsky in 1938. As a result, the formulas and forms of the 1938 Transitional Programme are treated as if endowed with almost-magical qualities, and the method of transitional demands is supposed to be inextricably linked with economic catastrophism.

In reality the method of transitional demands was the summing-up of a rich experience of revolutionary struggle. The Third Congress resolution summarises ideas sketched out or given pioneering application in Lenin's "The Impending Catastrophe and how to combat it", in Rosa Luxemburg's "Spartacus Programme" and speech to the founding Congress of the German Communist Party, and (in a less developed way) in Leon Trotsky's "Results and Prospects". It explicitly takes issue with the "Lassallian theory of the concentration of all the energies of the proletariat on a single demand, in order to use it as a lever in revolutionary action". "It is impossible", declares the resolution, "to direct the struggle against mere capitalist blows, which are coming thick and fast, into narrow doctrinaire channels".

The Third Congress resolution is, of course, placed within a perspective of acute instability of capitalism. Yet the Third Congress was the Congress which began to re-evaluate revolutionary strategy in light of the defeat of the post-war revolutionary assault in Europe and the evident limited revival of capitalism. Transitional demands were not mechanically linked to economic catastrophe.

The other document reproduced from the Communist International is the Bukharin-Thalheimer debate on programme at the Fourth Congress of the CI. A CI programme was eventually adopted only in 1928, by which time Stalinism was dominant, and the main value of that programme was that it evoked Trotsky's brilliant "Criticism of the Draft Programme of the Communist International". The beginnings of the CI's programme discussion, however, before the Stalinist dusk fell, contain much of great value. The Fourth congress debate was very brief (there was only one speaker apart from Bukharin and Thalheimer: Kabatchiev, whose contribution was of no great interest), but a book of discussion material was published around the same time. The book exists in French and in German, but not, as far as we have been able to find out, in English; we may be able to publish excerpts from it in future numbers of 'International Communist'.

Bukharin, in line with the undialectical schematism which had led him to oppose the right of nations to self-determination and then to form a 'Left Communist' faction in the Bolshevik Party around the time of the Brest-Litovsk negotiations, declares that a communist programme should not include partial demands. Thalheimer, taking up the arguments deployed by Lenin in the debate on the revision of the Bolshevik Party programme, shows that the programme must not only state fundamental principles, but also be a 'guide to action' for the party's daily agitation. Both speakers give concise and biting assessments of the programmatic and theoretical contrast between the Third and the Second International.

C.R.

# Partial struggles and partial demands

from the Theses of the Third Congress of the Communist International,  
1921

The development of the communist parties can only be achieved through a fighting policy. Even the smallest communist units must not rest content with mere propaganda and agitation. In all proletarian mass organisations they must constitute the vanguard, they must teach the backward, vacillating masses how to fight, by formulating practical aims for direct action, and by urging the workers to make a stand for the necessities of life. Only in this manner will Communists be able to reveal to the masses the treacherous character of all non-communist parties. The Communists must prove that they are able to lead in the practical struggle of the proletariat, and by promoting these conflicts, the Communists will succeed in winning over great masses of the proletariat to the struggle for the dictatorship.

The entire propaganda and agitation, as well as the other work of the Communist parties, must be based on the conception that no lasting betterment of the position of the proletariat is possible under capitalism; that the overthrow of the bourgeoisie is a pre-requisite for the achievement of such betterment, and the rebuilding of the social structure destroyed by capitalism. This conception, however, must not find expression in the abandonment of all participation in the proletarian struggle for actual and immediate necessities of life, until such a time as the proletariat will be able to attain them through its own dictatorship. Social-democracy is consciously deceiving the masses when, in the period of capitalist disintegration, at a time when capitalism is unable to assure to the workers even the subsistence of well-fed slaves, it has nothing better to offer than the old social-democratic programme of peaceful reforms to be achieved by peaceful means within the bankrupt capitalist system. Not only is capitalism, in the period of its disintegration, unable to assure to the workers decent conditions of life, but the social-democrats and reformists of all lands are also continually demonstrating that they are unwilling to put up any fight, even for the most modest demands contained in their programmes. The demand for socialisation or nationalisation of the most important industries is nothing but another such deception of the working masses. Not only did the centrists mislead the masses by trying to persuade them that nationalisation alone, without the overthrow of the bourgeoisie, would deprive capitalism of the chief industries, but they also endeavoured to divert the workers from the real and live struggles for their immediate needs, by raising their hopes of a gradual seizure of industry, to be followed by "systematic" economic reconstruction. Thus they have reverted to the minimum social-democratic programme of the reform of capitalism, which has now become open counter-revolutionary deception. The theory prevailing among a portion of the centrists, that the programme of the nationalisation of the coal, or any other industry, is based on the Lassallian theory of the concentration of all the energies of the proletariat on a single demand, in order to use it as a lever in revolutionary action, which in its development may lead to a struggle for power, is nothing but empty words. The suffering of the working class in every country is so intense, that it is impossible to direct the struggle against mere capitalist blows, which are coming thick and fast, into narrow doctrinaire

channels. On the contrary, it is essential to make use of all the economic needs of the masses, as issues in the revolutionary struggle, which, when united, form the flood of the social revolution. For this struggle, the Communist Parties have no minimum programme for the strengthening of this reeling world structure of capitalism. The destruction of this system is the chief aim and immediate task of the parties. But in order to achieve this task, the Communist Parties must put forward demands, and they must fight with the masses for their fulfilment, regardless of whether they are in keeping with the profit system of the capitalist class or not.

What the Communist Parties have to consider is, not whether capitalist industry is able to continue to exist and compete, but rather, whether the proletariat has reached the limit of its endurance. If these communist demands are in accord with the immediate needs of the great proletarian masses, and if they are convinced that they cannot exist without the realisation of these demands, the struggle for these demands will become an issue in the struggle for power. The alternative offered by the Communist International in place of the minimum programme of the reformists and centrists is:— the struggle for the concrete need of the proletariat, for demands which, in their application, undermine the power of the bourgeoisie, which organise the proletariat, and which form the transition to proletarian dictatorship, even if certain groups of the masses have not yet grasped the meaning of such proletarian dictatorship.

As the struggle for these demands embraces ever-growing masses, and as the needs clash with the needs of capitalist society, the workers will realise that capitalism must die if they are to live. The realisation of this fact is the basis of the will to fight for the dictatorship. It is the task of the communist parties to widen, to deepen and to co-ordinate these struggles which have been brought into being by the formulation of concrete demands. Every partial action undertaken by the working masses for the attainment of partial demands, every serious economic strike, mobilises at once the entire bourgeoisie, which as a class places itself upon the side of the threatened part of the employing class, to prevent even a partial victory of the proletariat (mutual employers' aid in Czechoslovakia, bourgeois strike-breakers in the English coal strike, the fascists in Italy, etc.). The bourgeoisie mobilises also its entire machinery of State in the fight against the workers (militarisation of Labour in France and in Poland, emergency laws during English coal miners' strike, etc.). The workers fighting for partial demands are automatically drawn into the fight against the entire bourgeoisie and its machinery of State. As the part struggles of isolated groups of workers are gradually merging into a general struggle of labour *versus* capital, so the Communist Party must also alter its watchword, which should be — "uncompromising overthrow of the adversary". In formulating their part demands the communist parties must take heed that these demands, based on the deeply rooted needs of the masses, are such as will organise the masses and not merely lead them into the struggle. All concrete watchwords, originating in the economic needs of the workers, must be utilised to focus and stimulate the struggle for the control of production, which must not assume the form of a bureaucratic organisation of social economy under capitalism, but of an organisation fighting against capitalism through the workers' committees as well as through the revolutionary trade unions.

It is only through the establishment of such workers' committees, and their coordination according to branches and centres of industry, that communists can prevent the splitting up of the masses by the social-democrats and the trade union leaders. The workers' committees will be able to fulfil this role only if they are born in an economic struggle, waged in the interests of the masses of workers, and provided they succeed in uniting all the revolutionary sections of the proletariat, including the communist party, the revolutionary parties, and those trade unions which are going through a process of revolutionary development.

Every objection to the establishment of such part demands, every accusation of reformism in connection with these part struggles, is an outcome of the same incapacity to grasp the live issues of revolutionary action which manifested itself in the opposition of some communist groups to participation in trade union activities and parliamentary action. Communists should not rest content with teaching the proletariat its ultimate aims, but should lend impetus to every practical move leading the proletariat into the struggle for these ultimate aims. How inadequate the objections to part demands are and how divorced from the needs of revolutionary life, is best exemplified by the fact that even the small organisations formed by the so-called "left" communists for the propagation of pure doctrines have seen the necessity of formulating part demands, in order to attract larger sections of workers than they have hitherto been able to muster, or else they have been obliged to take part in the struggle of wider masses of workers in order to influence them. The chief revolutionary characteristic of the present period lies in the fact that the most modest demands of the working masses are incompatible with the existence of capitalist society. Therefore the struggle, even for these very modest demands, is bound to develop into a struggle for Communism.

# Drafting the programme of the Communist International

From the 'report' of the Fourth Congress of  
the Communist International

1922

**Bukharin** (Russia): Comrades, the fact that we have placed so important and difficult a question as that of an international programme on the agenda of the World Congress is in itself the best evidence of our mighty growth. We may express our perfect confidence that the Communist International will also solve this problem, whereas in the camp of our adversaries of the Second and Two-and-a-Half Internationals we observe complete theoretical impotence. (Comrade Clara Zetkin: Perfectly true.)

Generally we may distinguish three phases in the development of the Marxian theory and its ideological construction. The first phase was the Marxism of Marx and Engels themselves. Then followed the second phase, which was the Marxism of the Second International. At the present time we have the third phase of Marxism, the Bolshevik or Communist Marxism, which is to a large extent reverting back to the original Marxism of Marx and Engels.

This was the child of the European revolution of 1848, and therefore possessed a highly revolutionary spirit.

... This revolutionary character of the Marxian theory is explained by the fact that the doctrines of Marx and Engels were evolved at a time when the whole of Europe was in the throes of revolution and the proletariat as a revolutionary class was entering the arena of world history. Then followed a different period with a different ideological tendency. Following the revolutionary epoch of the middle of last century, an entirely different historic epoch in the development of the capitalist system set in. It was the epoch of the gigantic growth of capitalism. This

growth was chiefly based upon the colonial policy of the bourgeoisie, and the stupendous development of continental industry which was chiefly stimulated by the exploitation of the colonial peoples. This created a certain community of interests between the continental bourgeoisie and the continental proletariat which was the basis for a great psychological and ideological tendency manifesting itself within the working class and, ergo, within the Socialist Parties.

Then came the second phase in the development of Marxism, namely, the phase of Social-Democratic Marxism, the well-known Marxism of the Marxist theoreticians. The struggle between the orthodox tendency and the reformist tendency, the great struggle between orthodox social democracy represented by Kautsky on the one hand against the Revisionists as represented by Edouard Bernstein on the other. I support the thesis that in this struggle, which took place a long time before the war, so-called orthodox Marxism, i.e., the Marxism of Karl Kautsky, surrendered to Revisionism in the most fundamental theoretical questions. This we failed to notice. Now we see clearly and distinctly, and thoroughly comprehend the underlying reasons of this phenomenon. Let us for instance consider the question of the impoverishment theory! You are all aware that Kautskian Marxism argued this question in a milder form than that stated by Marx himself. It was asserted that in the epoch of capitalist development the working class suffers a relative deterioration of its condition. Marx, however, in his theory analysed an abstract capitalist development which leads to a deterioration of the condition of the working class. What did Kautskian Marxism do? It limited the term working class to the continental working class. The condition of these strata of the proletariat went on improving, but Kautskian Marxism did not realise that this improvement in the condition of the continental working classes was bought at the price of the annihilation and spoilation of the colonial peoples. Marx was speaking of capitalist society as a whole.

Then take, for instance, his varying opinions on the general strike in his book on "The Social Revolution," where Kautsky asserts that if we are in a position to make the general strike, then we need no general strike. If not—we do not need one, either. What does it mean? It means nothing but pure opportunism, which we did not quite notice before, but which we see quite clearly now.

Let us take the third theoretical question, namely, the theory of the State. Here I shall have to speak at somewhat greater length. On the outbreak of the war we thought that Kautskianism had suddenly betrayed its own theories. This is what we thought and wrote at the time. But we were wrong. We can now quite calmly admit that we were wrong. Quite the contrary happened. The so-called betrayal by the social-democrats and the Kautskians were based on the theory which these theoreticians had already maintained before the outbreak of the war.

What were their statements about the State and the conquest of political power by the proletariat? They represented the case as though there was some object which had been in the hands of one class, and later passed into the possession of another class. This was also the way Kautsky saw it.

Let us now take the case of the imperialist war. If we now consider the State as a homogeneous instrument which changed hands in passing from one epoch to another, i.e., as almost a neutral thing, then it is perfectly conceivable that we should protect this instrument on the outbreak of war when the proletariat has the prospect of conquering the State in this manner. During the world war the question of protecting the State was brought to the forefront. This idea was thought out to its logical conclusions, and it was quite a logical consequence of this theory when Kautsky raised the question of national defence and answered that question in the affirmative.

The same with the question of the dictatorship of the proletariat. Even in a debate with the Revisionists, Kautsky never developed this question. He almost failed to say a single word upon this most important question and most important problem during the whole of that controversy. He said something to the effect that this question would be solved by future generations. That was his way of "stating the problem."

Comrades, when we examine these mental excursions and attempt to discover in them the sociological equivalent, we must declare that we have here an alleged Marxian ideology that was based on the aristocratic position of the continental workers, whose improved condition was secured by the spoilation of the colonial workers.

They are unable to analyse the revolution, they cannot produce an analysis that would furnish the basis for practical revolutionary decisions. They are evasive when they say: There is no logic in the events of our time.

Let us take for instance the theory of the crisis. With regard to this theory, Kautsky asserts that in our present theoretical consideration of the development of the capitalist system, we should admit quite frankly that the theory of crises should assume "more modest dimensions" in our argument. What does it mean? It means that Kautsky asserts that the capitalist world has become more harmonious in recent times. This assertion is naturally the embodiment of pure stupidity. The facts prove the opposite. We now find complete vindication of the theses and the theory of crises. They have been proven up to the hilt. We can even maintain now that the war itself was a specific form of economic crisis, and it is this specific form that we should theoretically conceive and theoretically analyse.

Let us now proceed to the theory of the State. This theory of the State has now been transformed by all the theoreticians of the Second International without exception into a direct plea for a bourgeois republic. In this respect there is absolutely no

difference between the bourgeois liberal scholars and the social democrats. On reading the writings of Cunow, for instance, we find that some of the bourgeois professors, like Franz Oppenheimer and others, notably those of the Gumplovitz school, are much nearer to the Marxian position than he. Cunow in his book claims the State to be a sort of universal welfare institution, a good father to all its children, whether of the working class or of the bourgeoisie. So the matter stands. I once said that this is a theory that was represented by the Babylonian king, Hamurabi. And this is the theoretical level of the representatives and principal sages of the Second International.

But there are theoretical betrayals which are even more flagrant and ignominious. I refer to the conception of Kautsky with regard to the proletarian revolution and to the coalition government. To write such stuff one has indeed to lose the last vestige of theoretical consciousness. Take for instance Kautsky's theory about the revolution. Do you know what is his latest discovery on this question? (1) The bourgeois revolution has to act by violence. (2) The proletarian revolution, precisely because it is a proletarian revolution, must not employ violence, or as another of these gentlemen has said, violence is always a reactionary force. We know what Engels has written about the revolution, in an Italian article entitled "Dell Autorita." He wrote: "The revolution is the most authoritative thing in the world; for revolution means an historic event, when one part of the population imposes its will upon the other part of the population by means of bayonets, guns and rifles." Such was the conception of revolutionary Marxism. And now we hear what the miserable Herr Kautsky has to tell us: "Bayonets, guns and other means of violence are purely bourgeois means. They have not been invented by the proletariat, but by the bourgeoisie. The barricade is a pure bourgeois institution." (Laughter.) In this way one could argue almost anything. Kautsky might, for instance, say: "Before the bourgeois revolution the bourgeoisie fought with ideas; consequently this is a purely bourgeois method. It would follow then that we must discard all ideas." Perhaps Kautsky has discarded all ideas now. (Laughter.) It would be really ridiculous to adopt such a method of reasoning.

Now we come to the question of the coalition. Here we reach the apex of all the discoveries of Kautsky. Kautsky believes himself to be the representative of orthodox Marxism. Marx maintained that the spirit of his teaching consisted of the doctrine of the proletarian dictatorship. There is a passage in Marx which reads: "The class struggle was known to many others before me, but my teaching consists of the knowledge that the development of capitalism leads inevitably to the dictatorship of the proletariat." This was the way Marx himself conceived his theory. This is the sum and substance of the Marxian doctrine. Now listen to what Kautsky writes: "In his famous article on the criticism of social-democratic programme,

Marx wrote: 'Between the capitalists and the communist society intervenes the revolutionary stage of transition from one into the other. This has its corresponding period of political transition, when the State can be nothing else but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.' " So said Marx.

And Kautsky, what has he to say? Let me quote him literally: "This sentence we should now modify on the basis of our recent experiences, and on the question of Government we should say: 'Between the time of the pure bourgeois and the time of the pure proletarian democratic State, there is a period of transition from one into the other. This has its corresponding period of political transition, when the government as a rule should take the form of a coalition government.'" (Laughter.)

This is indeed not a form of transition from Marxism to Revisionism, but it is even worse than the purest Revisionism.

I now turn to another question. Having disposed of the theoreticians of the Second International, I wish to say a few words on the new analysis of the present epoch, with particular reference to a point which has not been as yet fully elucidated. I think that the capitalist development as a whole should be considered from the standpoint of the expanded reproduction of capitalist contradictions, and it is from this standpoint that we ought to consider all the processes of capitalist development. We have now reached a stage of development when capitalism is breaking up. To some extent we already consider capitalist development in retrospect, but this does not prevent us from considering all the events of the capitalist epoch, including even the prognosis, from the standpoint of the steady and constant reproduction of capitalist contradictions. The war is the expression of the contradictions inherent in capitalist competition. We ought to explain the meaning of war solely as the expanded reproduction of the anarchistic structure of capitalist society. If this accentuation of the contradictions has already led to the impossibility of continued existence of capitalist society, this standpoint can also serve the purpose of elucidating all the other questions, such as the grouping of the working class, the social divisions of society, the position of the working class and the structure of modern society.

The second question to my mind is the question of imperialism. Political economy in the past, including also the Marxian theory, treated the subject of capitalist contradiction as something peculiar to industrial capitalism. It was an epoch of competition between the various industrialists whose methods consisted of lowering the price of commodities. This is almost the only sort of competition mentioned by Marx. But in the epoch of imperialist capitalism we find many other forms of competition wherein the method of reducing prices is of no significance. The main groups of the bourgeoisie are now in the nature of trustified groups within the framework of the State.

It is quite conceivable that such a form of enterprise, such a construction of competing groups, should resort chiefly to

violent methods of competition. The policy of low prices is almost an impossibility. Thus arise the new forms of competition which lead to military attack by the State.

I would now like to touch upon a third point that ought to be mentioned in the programme, namely, the emphasising of the role of the State in general, and the role of the State at the present moment in particular. We should admit quite frankly that the Marxian theory, and even orthodox Marxism, did not investigate the question of the State quite thoroughly. The role of the State is very important from all points of view, from the standpoint of the bourgeoisie as well as from the standpoint of the proletariat. On the other hand we are to destroy an organisation, and it is therefore important for us to know the situation as it existed previously so that we may create something of economic relations. All these circumstances should urge upon us the necessity of emphasising the question of the State and giving it prominent place in our programme.

I would further urge that we include in our programme something about the monopoly of education by the ruling class. We used to ignore this question in discussing our programmes in the past, but now, when the proletariat is striving for power and for the reorganisation of society, such questions as the training of our officials and administrators, the standard of education of our leaders before and after the conquest of power, must play an important part. All these questions are of great importance, yet they were never discussed before, because they did not appear to us to be practical questions. Now they have become absolutely practical questions, and for this reason we should give more place to this question than we have given before.

I think that in our programme we should touch upon the question of the specific symptoms of the maturing of Socialism within the capitalist society. It is a classical passage in the Marxian doctrine that the germs of the new society are generated in the womb of the old. But this theory has caused so much confusion in the ranks of the Second International that we should state the question more concretely than we did before. I cannot touch upon the question in its entirety, but this much I would like to say : We all know that the proletarian revolution imposes many demands upon us, that the proletarian revolution is at times accompanied by deterioration of productive forces. This is an inherent law of proletarian revolution. But our opponents want to tell us that this is due to the fact that capitalism is not yet ripe for Socialism. This is their main theoretical thesis in which they confuse the maturing of capitalism within the feudal system with the maturing of Socialism within the capitalist society. But we want to emphasise the difference of principle between the two phenomena. The proletariat can become the leader of society as a whole, the real creative genius of society, only after the dictatorship. It cannot be in any other way. This is the cardinal difference between the maturing of capitalism and the development of Socialism that we ought to emphasise.

I would further like to touch upon one more point which has not been sufficiently analysed, even in our literature, namely, the problem of growing into the Socialist state. The revisionist conception was that the capitalist state would gradually evolve into Socialism. We say that it begins only after the proletariat has established its dictatorship. The proletariat should first of all destroy the old bourgeois state and capture the power, and by this means change the economic relations. There is yet another point which has direct bearing on the preceding question, namely, the question of the national types of Socialism, as a form of production, of course. Before the revolution we discussed methods of systematic production, collective economy, etc., without having any concrete idea. Now, particularly after the experiences of the Russian Revolution, we see that we have before us a long period of various national types of Socialist production. Socialism can grow exclusively upon that which is already in existence, and therefore it may be assumed that the various Socialist forms will in a certain sense be the continuation of the previous capitalist forms, but under a different aspect; which means that the specific features of capitalism of the different countries will find their expression in the specific forms of Socialist production in those countries. Later on, of course, these differences will be obliterated by the onward march of proletarian rule. If we take all this into consideration, we may then pass to the discussion of other questions, such as the question of the new economic policy. This is the eighth point upon which I intended to say a few words here. This new economic policy may be viewed from totally different standpoints, from the standpoint of revolutionary tactics or from the standpoint of economic rationalism. These are two standpoints which do not always appear to be identical. From the tactical standpoint we have already heard the views of several comrades, including Comrades Lenin and Trotsky. I would like to examine this question from the standpoint of economic rationalism.

I maintain that the proletariat of every individual country, after gaining political power, will be confronted by the important problem of economic organisation, the problem of proportion between the forms of production, which the proletariat should organise upon a rational plan. This is the most important economic problem with which the proletariat will be confronted. If the proletariat fails to fix this proportion aright, if it undertakes too much, it will eventually be confronted by the situation in which the productive forces will not be developed, but rather hampered, and lead to a gigantic administrative machine, with too many officials and functionaries to take the place of these small producers, small peasants, etc., in their economic functions.

The new economic policy is on the one hand a specific Russian phenomenon, yet on the other hand it is also a universal phenomenon. (Quite true!) It is not exclusively a strategic retreat, but it is also the solution of a great problem of social organisation, namely, the proportion between the various

branches of production which we should nationalise, and the branches of production which we are not able to nationalise. Could we, for instance, proceed right away with the organisation of the American farmers? Of course not! For such strata the free economic movement should remain. The same would be the case in Germany. Do you believe that the victorious proletariat would at once be able to organise a communist basis all the bourgeois economies, particularly in Bavaria? Of course not! But this problem is also connected with yet a different problem. It happens that in a revolution the principle of economic rationalism clashes with another principle that is of equal importance to the proletariat, namely, the principle of the pure political expediency. Of this I have frequently quoted examples. For instance, if for the purpose of erecting barricades you saw down telegraph posts, it stands to reason that you are not thereby increasing the productive forces. (Laughter.) The same thing happens in a revolution. Here we get the irrational thing, which is economically inexpedient, but which from the standpoint of the political struggle and the triumph in the civil war is quite a means to an end. These two standpoints, economic rationality and political expediency, are not at all identical, frequently they come into collision. The prime consideration, however, should be political expediency, if only for the reason that it is impossible to build up Socialism without previously establishing the proletarian State.

I now come to the fourth sub-section, which I designate as the new universal tactical problems.

Firstly, quite briefly, on the question of the colonies. For this question we must devote more space in our programme than we have done hitherto. (Quite right.) We are now making the attempt to write an international programme. We must therefore deal with this question far more exhaustively than has been the case hitherto.

The second tactical problem is that of National Defence. This problem was to us Communists quite clear from the outbreak of the war, and our attitude was almost a flat rejection of the national defence, but now we see something modified and more complex. The essential complicating factor in this question is the fact that in one country we have a proletarian dictatorship, and the existence of a proletarian state changes immediately the whole situation.

When the bourgeoisie speaks of the national defence, it means the defence of the bourgeois state; and when we speak of national defence we mean the defence of the proletarian state. It ought therefore to be stated clearly in our programme that the proletarian state should and must be protected not only by the proletariat of this country, but also by the proletariat of all countries. This is the new situation of the question where it differs from the situation at the outbreak of the war. The second question is: Should the proletarian states, for reasons of

the strategy of the proletariat as a whole, conclude any military alliances with the bourgeois states? Here there is no difference in principle between a loan and a military alliance. And I maintain that we have already grown so big that we are in a position to conclude a military alliance with a bourgeois state for the purpose of destroying some other bourgeois state with the help of the bourgeois ally. What would happen later on, under a certain readjustment of forces, you can easily imagine for yourselves. This is a question of purely strategical and tactical expediency. In this manner it should be stated in our programme.

Under this form of national defence, i.e., the military alliance with bourgeois states, it is the duty of the Comrades in every country to aid this alliance to victory. If in its subsequent phase of development, the bourgeoisie of such a country should be overthrown, then other questions arise—(laughter)—which it is not my duty to outline here, but which you will readily conceive.

Next we should make mention of a technical point, of the right of Red Intervention. This is to my mind the touch-stone for all Communist parties. There is a widespread outcry about Red militarism. We should make it plain in our programme that every proletarian state has the right of Red intervention. (Radek interposes: You are the Honorary Chief of a regiment, and that is why you talk like this! Laughter.) In the Communist Manifesto we were told that the proletariat should conquer the whole world. Now this could not be done with our bare hands. (Laughter.) This has to be done with bayonets and rifles. For this reason the spread of the system on which the Red Army is based is also the spread of Socialism, of the proletarian might, of the revolution. This gives the basis to the right of Red intervention under special circumstances which makes the technical realisation of it possible.

Now I have done with the various problems, and I will now pass to a general survey of our problem. The programme of the national parties' should consist at least of two parts:

(1) A general part which is suitable to all parties. The general part of the programme should be printed in the membership book of every member in every country. (2) A national part, setting out the specific demands of the labour movement of the respective countries. And possibly also (3), but this is really not a part of the programme—a programme of action which should deal with purely tactical questions, and which might be altered once every fortnight. (Laughter.) Some Comrades want us to define in our programme also the tactical questions, such as the capital levy in Germany, the tactics of the United Front, or even the question of the workers' government. Comrade Varga said it would be mental cowardice to protest against it. (Radek interposes: Quite right!) Nevertheless, I maintain that the desire to settle these questions is nothing but the outcome of the opportunist proclivities of the respective Comrades. (Laughter.) Such questions and slogans like the United Front or the workers' government, for instance,

or the capital levy, are slogans that are based on very shifting ground. This basis consists of a certain depression within the labour movement. These Comrades want to make this defensive position of the proletariat a plank on the programme, which would make it impossible to assume the offensive. Against such a proposition I will fight with all means at my disposal. We will never allow the adoption of such planks in our programme. (Radek, interposing : "Who is the "we"?) We, that is, all the best elements of the Communist International. (Laughter and cheers.)

Comrades, I think that in the theoretical part we should include the following sub-sections. First a general analysis of capitalism, which would be of particular importance to the colonial countries. Then we should have an analysis of imperialism and the decay of capitalism, and, further on, the analysis of the epoch of the social revolution.

In the second part of the programme we ought to have a sketch of the future Communist society. I take it that a picture of the Communist society in the programme would be necessary in order to show what Communism really means and the difference between Communism and the various transitory stages.

The third part should contain the overthrow of the bourgeoisie and the struggle of the proletariat for power.

The fourth part should be devoted to general strategic questions, not such questions as the workers' government, but such basic questions as, for instance, the attitude towards social democracy and the trade unions.

Because these two questions are not of a fluctuating nature, the strategical and technical questions can be laid down in the programme.

With regard to the national part of the programme, it is not my task to touch upon these problems, for a special investigation will have to be made according to the country and the programme.

I conclude my lengthy report with the hope that we will emerge from the Fifth Congress with an effective, truly revolutionary orthodox Marxian programme. (Prolonged cheers.)

**Chairman:** Comrade Thalheimer has the floor.

**Thalheimer (Germany):** Comrades, I do not wish to repeat Comrade Bukharin's excellent speech to prove the theoretical bankruptcy of the Second and Second-and-a-Half Internationals; I only wish to bring out a few typical examples.

First of all I would like to point out that in his programme, Kautsky rejects even the fundamentals of the Marxian conception of capitalist economics. For instance, one of our basic conceptions is that the regulating law of capitalism is the production of surplus value. Suddenly, Kautsky discovers that capitalism is based upon the needs of consumption. There could be no more absolute, no more fundamental capitulation to capitalist economics than this.

To-day, Kautsky totally agrees with Bernstein on all points. He has accepted all Bernstein's reformistic proposals and declares them to be the true Marxism. I will not discuss these things any longer theoretically, but practically. What is the purpose of these proposals? They go along the well-known paths of Municipalisation, and secondly of Guild Socialism, a new importation. To prove his new theories a la Bernstein, Kautsky, who is usually a very sober thinker, writes the most fantastic nonsense. For instance, take Guild Socialism. The Guild Socialists believe that, without the conquest of political power, the trade unions may introduce Socialism step by step, so to speak, behind the back of capitalism. One need only look at the trade unions and realise their financial situation in the disruption of capitalism to see that this is a pure phantasy. At a time when the trade unions had the greatest difficulty in gathering strike funds, who can expect them to introduce Socialist economy behind the back of capitalism?

Another favourite hobby-horse of the reformists is Municipal Socialism, Municipalisation. Anyone who has any knowledge of the situation in the West knows that the most striking characteristic of the Western countries is the bankruptcy not only of the State, but also the municipalities; and this is the problem of to-day for the municipalities; not the transformation to Socialism, but the defence against the attacks of capitalists who wish to gain control of the municipal industries.

A third point. To render the transformation more easy, it has been proposed to take over capitalist property, and pay compensation. You all know that Karl Marx has said that eventually the English landowners would be bought out. But he did not mean this in the sense that this could take place before the conquest of Power, but only after the proletariat had captured political power. Everyone knows that the first requisite for the reconstruction of the Socialist Society is the liquidation of the tremendous weight of debts which weighs upon industry. This mild method of buying out the capitalists is just as much a Utopia as Kautsky's idea of Guild Socialism or Municipalisation.

A few more remarks to bring out more clearly what Bukharin said on the theoretical capitulation, especially as it appeared in the programmes of the Second and Second-and-a-Half Internationals and the Görlitzer programme. All that Bukharin has emphasised and argued here as if he were lecturing to a class of boys, the dismissal of the impoverishment theory, of the crisis theory, etc.; all this has appeared clearly in the commentaries on the Görlitzer programme.

Comrades Kampffmeier, Bernstein, Stapfer, have shown clearly this capitulation.

Now, with regard to debatable questions, I will deal with the following:—

(1) The basic section—the theoretical explanation of imperialism in connection with the theory of accumulation.

(2) The question of temporary measures, of partial demands before the conquest of power, which I consider as the main question for the preparation of a general programme, as well as the programmes of the individual parties.

(3) A few brief remarks on economic measures after the conquest of power, war and communism, and N.E.P.

(4) The form and construction of the programme.

I will speak at once on the first point, the theoretical explanation of imperialism. There were two main questions which entered here: first, the more important, is imperialism an inevitable phase of capitalist development? The second question is a theoretical explanation of this inevitability of imperialist development.

When we say imperialism, we do not mean only the colonial expansion of the capitalist States, but the special form of expansion under the present imperialist conditions. Comrade Luxemburg formulated this special form of expansion as follows:

"In the Imperialist era, we are confronted with a struggle for the rest of the non-capitalist territory, for its new division, and finally, in connection with this, with the expansion of the capitalist and political basis of power."

These facts have been known for a long time and cannot be contradicted.

So the question presents itself in the following manner: Can capitalism expand without limit, or are there certain necessary theoretical bounds to this growth? Some people have objected to this theory of accumulation as a sort of fatalism, according to which capitalism reaches a point when it breaks down mechanically. What it actually means is something different. It means that capitalism is forced into an imperialist phase which sharpens the class antagonism, that it is forced into the most severe political and social catastrophes. It follows therefrom that it is not this limit which will determine the end of capitalism, but the severe crisis into which imperialism leads it.

This is one side of the question. And now, comrades, let us examine for a moment the opposite position occupied by the staunchest opponents of this theory. Hilferding, dealing with the Marxian theory in his book "Financial Capital," says that capitalism has in it the possibilities of unlimited expansion. As to Bauer—not to miss the Austrian head of the school—he has advanced a remarkable theory, namely, that capitalist development is conditioned and regulated by the increase of the population. This means turning upside down the Marxian theory of population, which says exactly the opposite.

What is behind all this? It is the idea that it is possible to direct imperialism backwards to free trade and its theoretical consequences. The toiling masses must not struggle forward towards socialism, but backward, allying themselves with the corresponding sections of the bourgeoisie, following the same

course. The fullest fruition of this theory was reached in an article by Hilferding, in the beginning of 1922, in which he claims that the period of imperialistic antagonisms had come to an end, and that now the era of imperialistic harmony was beginning.

I now come to the point relating to the general program and the programs of the individual parties. Here I stand in sharpest opposition to Comrade Bukharin on the question of the demands of the minimum program. Comrade Bukharin takes the position that one must separate the transitory or immediate demands from the program proper. He assigns them to a separate room, on the door of which he affixes the inscription, "Program of Action." Here, one may commit all kinds of iniquities. (Comrade Bukharin, interrupting: But admission is free!) Free admission is all right. Then let us open the door and see what things programmatically admissible we are going to find there. (Interruption: What do you consider admissible things?). That is just the point. We had opposition in Germany to the inclusion of the transitional demand for the conquest of power in the program. In this, some have seen, as Comrade Bukharin has, a certain danger of opportunism. We must, therefore, very carefully examine the question as to how far it is possible to separate the tactical principles from our general principles and aims. I am of the opinion that those who see any guarantee in this division of tactics, principles and aims are in great error, and are exposing us to just those dangers that certain of these which they seek to avoid will be neglected. (Hear, hear.) One need only look at the history of the Second International and its decay to realise that it was precisely this division of the tactical clauses of the program from the ultimate aim which accelerated its deterioration into opportunism. How did this process start in Germany? In the Bernstein Kautsky debates on tactics, the final goal remained. And to-day, when we wish to emphasise the difference between communists and social reformists, we say: We differ in our final aims; we want socialism and communism, while they do not want it. How do we prove this statement? By pointing to the tactics and the road which these people followed and which are quite different from ours. That is the principal point. I claim, therefore, that specific difference between us and the reformist socialists lies not in the fact that we keep our immediate aims to a separate compartment, apart from our program but in the fact that we bring our immediate aims and preliminary demands into the closest relationship with our principles and final aims.

Comrades, the question of these transition demands and the minimum program is not new. This question was already fought out once even on Russian ground, and I think that it will be of interest to read the documents bearing on it. It was in the autumn of 1917 that the question of the Russian Party program was discussed. The question arose then, should the

Russian Party, which was on the eve of assuming power, retain only the maximum program and eliminate the minimum program. I believe that it will be as well to quote Comrade Lenin's statement in this connection. Comrade Lenin said then—you will excuse me if the question is rather long: "Our entire program would be nothing but a scrap of paper if it were not to serve us in all eventualities and in all the phases of the struggle by its application, and not by its non-application. If our program is the formulation of the historic development of society from capitalism to socialism, it must naturally also formulate all the transition phases of this development, and must be able to explain to the proletariat at any time the process of the transition towards socialism. Hence, it follows that the proletariat must not be put in such a position where it would be forced even for a single moment to abandon its program or be itself abandoned by it."

This fact finds expression in the fact that there is not a single moment in which the proletariat having by force of circumstances assumed the power should not be obliged to take some measures for the realisation of its program, which would be in the nature of transition measures of a socialist nature. Behind the assertion that the socialist program may during some phase of the political domination of the proletariat, fail to give any directions for its realisation, colours unconsciously the other assertion—that the socialist program in general can never be realised.

From the general or fundamental part of the program, we shall now go over to the program.

We are going into the battle, i.e., we are struggling for the conquest of the political power by means of our Party. This power would be a dictatorship of the proletariat and of the poor peasantry. When we assume this power, we are not only not afraid to go beyond the limits of the bourgeois order, but we declare, on the contrary, quite openly and precisely that we will go beyond these limits, that we will march fearlessly towards socialism and that our way towards it leads via the Soviet Republic, the nationalisation of the banks and trusts, workers' control, obligatory labour, the nationalisation of the land, confiscation of the big estates, etc., etc. It is in this sense that we formulated a program of transition measures towards socialism.

But we must not brag while going to battle. We must not eliminate the minimum program, for this would be tantamount to bragging. (Hear, hear) We do not want "to demand anything from the bourgeoisie, but we must create everything ourselves, and our work must not be a tinkering within the limits of the bourgeois order."

Such an attitude would be nothing but empty bragging, for, first of all, one must conquer power, and we have not yet done that. In the first instance we must put the transition

measures towards socialism into practice and we must lead our revolution to the final victory of the international socialist revolution. It is only "when the battle is won" that one can put aside the minimum program as useless.

I shall now give you yet another quotation which will be useful for our further discussion of the program. Comrade Lenin continues:

We do not know if we will be victorious to-morrow or a little later. I, personally, am inclined to think that it will be to-morrow (I am writing this on October 5, 1917), and that we might be too late in taking over the power. However, to-morrow is to-morrow, and not to-day. We do not know how soon after our victory the revolution will come in the West. We do not know if after our victory there will not be periods of reaction and of counter-revolutionary victories. There is nothing impossible in that. Therefore, we shall, after our victory, construct "a triple line of trenches" against such eventuality.

As yet we do not know and we cannot know anything about this. No one can know it, and, therefore, it is ridiculous to throw out the minimum program, which is very much needed as long as we are still living within the bourgeois order, as long as we have not destroyed this order, have not laid the foundation for the transition to socialism, have not beaten the bourgeoisie and having beaten it, have not totally destroyed it. All this will come and will probably come much sooner than some of us expect. I am myself of the opinion that it will begin to-morrow, but to-morrow is not yet with us.

Let us deal with the minimum program on the political field. It is intended for the bourgeois republic. We add that we do not confine ourselves to its limits, but that we begin at once to struggle for the higher type—the Soviet Republic. We must do this. We must march towards the new republic with boldness and determination, and I am convinced that we will do so. However, the minimum program must not be thrown out on any account, for the Soviet Republic is not yet with us. Moreover, the possibility of "attempts at restoration" are not excluded, and we must go through with it and remove it. It is also possible that during the transition from the old to the new, "combined types" of government will make their appearance as pointed out in the "Rabochi Put" a few days ago; for instance, the Soviet Republic as well as a constituent Assembly. All this must be outlived, and then there will be ample time to throw out the minimum program.

And, in conclusion, there is the following statement:

"The same is the case on the economic field. We are all agreed that the fear to march towards socialism is tantamount to ignominious betrayal of the interests of the proletariat. We are also all of us agreed that the first steps in this direction must be measures such as the nationalisation of banks and

trusts. Let us first of all bring into being these and similar measures, and then we can consider further steps, for experience will have broadened our outlook. Practical experience is worth a million times more than the best programs. It is quite possible and even probable that even here we shall not be able to do without "combined types" for the transition period. For instance, we cannot at once nationalise the small industrial concerns, employing a few workers, neither can we put them under a real workers' control. These concerns may be tied hand and foot through the nationalisation of the banks and trusts, but there is no reason for throwing out the minimum program, as long as there are even small relics of bourgeois conditions. As Marxists, who enter boldly into the greatest world revolution and yet take a sane view of facts, we have no right to throw out the minimum program:

"If we were to throw it out now, we should only prove that we have lost our heads, even before we could achieve victory. But we must not lose our heads, neither before nor during nor after the victory, for if we lose our heads, we shall lose all."

Comrades, thus wrote Lenin, on October 6th, 1917, at a time when he could say: "The proletarian dictatorship, our victory, is a thing of to-morrow, but we are not yet there, it is still to-day with us." Comrades, looking at it on a world scale, we are certainly justified in saying that the victory of the world revolution is not a matter of to-day. Perhaps, it is not even matter of to-morrow, at least not in the sense as this was said in 1917. If we consider things on a world scale, we are obliged to say that the interval between the present state and the realisation of the proletarian dictatorship on a world scale must be measured by years, and perhaps even by decades, at least if we include in addition to the big capitalist countries also the colonial and semi-colonial countries. For the enormous field which lies before us we must lay out exact landmarks, and I am asking myself what kind of land marks and fundamental rules we should have. Comrade Bukharin's chief objection consisted in the assertion that we cannot include concrete everyday demands in the general program, because the latter are only temporary and might change every month or every week. He also said that these concrete everyday demands vary in the various countries, and that we cannot, therefore, bring them under one heading. My answer to this is: We need not bring into the general program nor into any national programs the concrete everyday demands in all their details, but we must give the fundamental tactical rules, the tactical principles and the methods (if you will allow me to say so) from which all these concrete separate demands may be unmistakably drawn.

Comrades, a second important matter relating to the transition period is our relation to bourgeois democracy. I find

in the program submitted by Comrade Bukharin an admirable critical analysis of bourgeois democracy, but do you regard the Communist International as a solid whole, so that it suffices for all its Parties, let us say from India to Soviet Russia? (Bukharin: No! Not by a long way!) First we must have a guide as to the relations of the Communists to the democrats in those countries where bourgeois democracy has not yet been established, that is to say, where the struggle must still be against absolutist and feudal forms of the State. Secondly, we must have some direction for the policy of the Communists in such a situation as that in Germany, in connection with the defence of the republic against monarchist attacks. And, thirdly, we must have some guidance for the Communists in a situation similar to that which prevailed in Germany in November, 1918, when there was an opportunity of breaking up the democracy and establishing a dictatorship. I repeat that all these transitional phases must be dealt with in their general fundamentals, not in detail. And that this is quite possible, is proven by the Communist Manifesto of 1848. Take, for example, the last chapter, which deals with the relation of Communists to other parties, to bourgeois democracy, to the petty-bourgeois, etc. In a few pithy sentences the path is indicated.

I now come, finally, to the construction of the program. I would like to remark here that, on the whole, one can agree with Comrade Bukharin's proposals. We have ceased analysing the capitalist system in our program. We have begun to analyse its imperialistic stage. We have come to the conclusion that this analysis is necessary and must be undertaken.

I believe that it will be necessary to consider the proposition of Comrade Varga, and also to return to preface our program by an analysis of the pre-capitalistic methods of exploitation. If we really want an international Communist program, we shall have to do this.

I agree that it is absolutely necessary that the program should be short, perhaps even shorter than that of Comrade Bukharin. It should also, of course, be as simple as possible. And we also admit that the German program needs improvement.

In conclusion, I wish to emphasise that we must make our Communist program invulnerable. But we cannot hope for this if we leave a long stretch of our revolutionary path unilluminated, or, to use another term, if we omit a substantial portion of our road from our chart. (Loud applause.)

Comrades, we are faced with the question whether the Communist Party should have a maximum and minimum program for the period of transition. The Communist Party cannot accept a minimum program such as that of the social democratic parties before the war, because the Communist Party bases itself on the conception that capitalism has entered a severe crisis, which inevitably and rapidly will cause its final disruption. The duty of the proletariat to-day is not adaptation—for this

was the sense of the old minimum program—but to accelerate the downfall of capitalism and the victory of the revolution.

Furthermore, political demands in the minimum program cannot be realised so long as the bourgeoisie maintain their power by a class dictatorship. Even the minimum program cannot be realised because of the economic crisis, the high cost of living and the destruction of capitalism.

The Communist Party believes that capitalism has entered the revolutionary crisis and that we are witnessing the beginning of the proletarian world revolution.

This is why the main task of the proletariat and of the Communist Party is the conquest of political power and the realisation of the Maximum program.

#### Can the Communist Party have a Minimum Program?

This is the question before the conquest of power—which now seems longer than in 1918 and 1919—may the Communist Party renounce all demands within the limits of capitalism? Of course not. But these demands have not the same significance nor the same importance as in the old minimum program. They are only transitory demands from which the working class will rise to the larger demands of the maximum program. To-day, these demands have revolutionary significance; they are a step in the growth and intensification of the proletarian struggle.

Among these demands some are of a more temporary nature and depend upon the momentary condition of the struggle. They must be put up as slogans (demands of the hour).

The others are more durable. They contain the more important demands for which the Communist Party will fight until the conquest of power; they have a place in the program. But, being of a temporary nature, they do not determine the maximum demands and the conditions of the struggle. On the other hand, since the struggle for their realisation always brings us inevitably to the question of the conquest of power, and the realisation of maximum demands, we cannot give these major minimum demands an independent place in the program. They must be added to the maximum program and come at the end of the maximum demands.

In the program we must give the general lines of our tactics, taking into consideration the principles of the Communist Party and the conditions of the present historical epoch, but we cannot now designate the special application of these outlines at any given moment.

In conclusion, it is true that no programs are worth anything without a real revolutionary movement of the proletariat. On the other hand, it is also true that every proletarian movement, which has no substantial theoretical basis and a clear revolutionary aim, is condemned to impotence, and to be a tool in the hands of the capitalists.

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAPITALISM IN RUSSIA

By Stan Lomax.

## PART 2: THE STATE, FOREIGN CAPITAL, AND THE RISE OF BIG INDUSTRY.

### INTRODUCTION

In part 1 of this article ('International Communist' no. 4), we examined the debate between Populists, 'Legal Marxists', and revolutionary Marxists over the development of capitalism in Russia.

The Populists argued that lack of an adequate home market would prevent any serious capitalist development in Russia, beyond a feeble and 'artificial' development fostered by the State. Instead, Russia could proceed straight to a socialist society based on the peasant communes.

The Legal Marxists refuted the Populists in an academic fashion, producing abstract schemes to show that capitalist development was possible. Tugan-Baranovsky, for example, constructed a model of capitalism expanding with little or no consumer market on the basis of an ever-increasing production of means of production. They played down or ignored the contradictions of capitalist development, seeing only its general historic necessity and its progressive side.

Lenin showed that the market could expand, and was expanding, despite impoverishment and unemployment — but with contradictions and crises. He demonstrated that capitalist relations were rapidly becoming dominant in the countryside, and that the road to socialism lay through the struggles of the working class and not through the fast-disappearing peasant commune.

The second part of the article examines the concrete forms and stages of capitalist development in Russia. The decisive rise of large-scale industry in Russia dates from the early 1890s. The Emancipation of the serfs, in 1861, did not in itself and immediately unleash capitalist forces (★1). But Tsarist state policy between 1861 and the 1890s, guided by political and military motives, laid the groundwork for large-scale capitalist

development. Railways were built. The peasantry was taxed heavily. The countryside came more and more under the sway of capitalist relations, and thus a large reserve army of labour was created. Foreign investment was drawn into the country.

From 1887 to 1897 the value of production increased 112.8% and the number of industrial workers, 59.2%. Heavy industry developed fastest: mining at 11.2% per year, the metallurgical industries at 8.4%. In 1900 this development was cut short by a recession in world trade. But after a further boom in 1908-1913, Russia was by 1913 the largest importer of machinery in the world.

In the west, capitalist industry had developed gradually and organically through several stages. In the earliest factories there was very little large-scale machinery; the direct manual labour of the worker was still the chief productive force, augmented only by cooperation and by hand tools. Step by step capitalist industry developed to the point where large-scale, power-driven machinery was the dominant productive force.

In Russia, technology was directly transplanted from the west, in the hands of foreign capital. Thus backward Russia had the biggest and most modern factories in the world. As early as 1902, nearly 50% of all workers were in factories of over 1000 employees.

It was a rapid, but a lopsided development. Most machinery had to be imported. There was no car industry. Important natural resources like the potash deposits of the north-east, and phosphate deposits vital for fertiliser production, were left unexploited. In many key areas, production was deliberately restricted by the foreign-owned firms which dominated Russian industry, to suit their interests.

In 1914, the first world war cut across Russia's development. Its domination by English, and, especially, French capital made it inevitable that Russia would be drawn into the war. But the revolutionary explosions produced by the war were no "historical accident", nor were the Bolsheviks attempting to flout the laws of history with a "coup d'état" when they took power in October 1917. The conflict-ridden character of Russia's capitalist development, and its enmeshing in the world economy, laid the basis both for the workers' conquest of power and for its dependence on the world revolution.

#### FROM THE 1860s TO THE 1880s

By 1860, of 800,000 industrial workers in Russia, over 500,000 were wage workers. The total number of industrial workers had quadrupled since 1800; exports and imports had increased about 200% from 1826 to 1860; and about one quarter of all grain was sold on the market in 1851.

It was, however, only a very primitive and localised capitalist development. Adequate transport was lacking. The first railway was not built until 1837, and in 1855 there were only about 660 miles of railway in the whole of Russia.

There was no real capital goods industry. By 1860 Russia was importing about 8 million rubles worth per year of machinery and tools (10 rubles = £1 at that time). The leading industries between 1825 and 1860, reflecting the needs of Tsarist military policy, were textiles, sugar, and fabrication of metal goods.

A large part of the mining and metallurgical industries was worked by serfs and one immediate result of Emancipation was a partial recession in those industries.

The commune system made it very difficult for a peasant to leave the village. In addition, the burden of taxes and debts (from buying land) incurred by the peasants in the years following Emancipation cut down their buying power.

The Emancipation was a calculated political measure to forestall peasant rebellion. At the same time the state took measures towards modernisation for political and military reasons. In the first place, it advance money for the construction of railways.

In 1860, there were less than 1,000 miles of rail. In 1861-65, 1,300 miles were opened; in 1866-70, 4,200 miles. Necessary railway equipment had to be imported, as there was not sufficient home-based manufacture. Nevertheless, the metal and fuel industries were stimulated directly by the railway building, and other industries by the railways themselves (★18; and see Table 1).

### THE BOOM OF THE 1890s

By 1890, the metal and fuel industries had been developed sufficiently to provide a basis for the broader advance of heavy industry (see Table 2). Capitalist relations were well established, and the boom of the 1890s took Russia into the ranks of the industrial nations (see Table 3). A sizable industrial working class was created, more concentrated in large factories than any other in the world. In 1895, 42% of the industrial workforce was in factories with over 500 workers, compared to 15.3% in Germany (★19; and see Table 4). By 1902, nearly 50% of all workers were to be found in enterprises employing at least 1,000. Such enterprises numbered 11% of all factories over 100 workers.

Surveys carried out in the mid-1880s revealed that over 50% of workers had had relatives who had been working in industry for several years ('hereditary proletarians').

Lenin's analysis of the possibility of declining real wages with a generally rising total consumption of commodities was born out. For industrial workers, money wages per head rose in most industries between the 1860s and 1890s. However, real wages declined by 20 to 30% (★20). The agricultural proletariat grew to 3½ million in the 1880s (★21), and their living standards also declined. Although aggregate consuming power increased with the increase in the worker population, capital accumulation very much outstripped this.

Foreign capital played a very big role. In 1890, foreign capital was about 33% of corporate capital. In 1900, about 50% of corporate capital was foreign — 70% in the mining industry, 42% in the metallurgical industry.

### THE ROLE OF THE STATE

The state was the forcing house of Russian industry, nursing and nurturing the tender shoots of capitalist development until they were sturdy plants in their own right.

The basic problem for the Russian state was that it needed to attract foreign loans for the initial funding of the heavy imports needed to develop the railways and other associated industries. To do this, it had to rectify its balance of payments and stabilise its currency. To boost its revenue, it increased tax burdens, especially on the peasantry, which paid land taxes as well as indirect taxes (there was no income tax) — see Table 5. From 1861 to 1900 direct taxes doubled and indirect taxes rose four and a half times, while population rose by only 78% (★22).

In response to the demands of taxes and of redemption payments, the peasants were forced to throw larger and larger amounts of their grain onto the export market, especially in the 1880s when world wheat prices fell dramatically (wheat prices fell from an average of 85.1 kopecks per pood in 1876-80 to 55.6 kopecks per pood in 1891-95) (★23).

The peasantry were increasingly drawn into capitalist relations. By the 1890s 50% or more of the grain produced was put on the market, to feed the growing towns or to go overseas. Government policies impoverished the peasantry and speeded up differentiation among them. A small minority became capitalist operators or 'big' peasants; there was a small 'middle' layer; the majority became victims of the moneylenders and rich peasants, or ended up as rural proletarians or semi-proletarians — or were driven into unemployment, or moved to the towns. At the same time artisan industry declined under the competition of capitalist industry.

By 1905, it has been estimated, nearly 20% of the peasantry of European Russia was effectively dispossessed. The reserve supply of labour was about three times the size of the employed population.

The Populists were certainly correct about the trends to increasing unemployment. Because they allowed their pro-peasant moral feelings to govern their intellectual judgment, they were unable to see that growing unemployment is quite compatible with capitalist development, so long as the number brought under the sway of capitalism, as consumers or labour power, increases. The problem of peasant revolt is another question!

## THE WITTE SYSTEM

When Witte became the Minister in 1891, he inaugurated many reforms which made him unpopular with the Autocracy, as well as with the mass of the peasants. He was convinced of the need for an increasing scale of government intervention in all aspects of life.

"Considering the weak development of the habits of self-help among the population, the whole burden of the struggle with public misfortune falls inevitably upon the government" (★24).

He accordingly stepped up government expenditure, taking care to keep the ordinary budget in surplus, went onto the Gold Standard, and attracted large amounts of direct foreign investment. But steady, conflict-free progress was not the result. In fact, Witte increased Russian state indebtedness, while doing nothing to solve the chronic peasant problem. He went under in 1900, in the wake of the 1899 depression and reaction from all sides. The bourgeoisie resented his interference, the Autocracy feared that their grip would be eroded by the galloping capitalist development and the 'excessive' welfare spending.

## 20th CENTURY DEVELOPMENTS

In the boom of 1908-13, there was a further annual increase in production of 6½%; a further increase in the proportion of the population living in towns — from 12.8% in 1897 to 14% in 1914 (★26); and a more than 50% increase in the number of industrial workers between 1902 and 1914 (★27). Allowing for price increases, total production rose about 74% between 1900 and 1913, and per capita production by about 46%. Most of the increase took place in 1908-13. By 1900, Russia compared favourably with 1840 France and 1860 Germany in per capita production of key commodities like raw cotton, pig iron, and in coal consumption (★28). By 1913 Russia had become the largest importer of machinery in the world.

How would capitalist development have continued if the First World War had not intervened? The question is highly speculative, since once the war was on, Russia was bound to be drawn in because of the dependence of the exchequer on Anglo-French loans. At least half the public debt was owed abroad, and, on the eve of the Revolution, foreign capital accounted for at least 43% of total basic stock capital in the 18 major corporate banks, 34% of industrial capital, and about half the annual profits of industry. The trend was for foreign capital to gain further predominance through its control of the most advanced sectors. Through large scale monopolisation and syndication, foreign capital was gaining a semi-colonialist stranglehold, developing and retarding sectors of industry to its own advantage.

TABLE 1: EXPANSION OF PRODUCTION, 1860-1876.

|                 | 1860                               | 1876  |
|-----------------|------------------------------------|-------|
|                 | millions of rubles                 |       |
| Cotton spinning | 28.7                               | 44.2  |
| Cotton Goods    | 42.9                               | 96.3  |
| Woolen Yarns    | 0.45                               | 2.5   |
| Woolen goods    | 34.9                               | 52.7  |
| Machines        | 14.0                               | 43.4  |
|                 | millions of poods [1 pood = 36 lb] |       |
| Petrol          | 0.6                                | 10.9  |
| Coal            | 18.3                               | 111.3 |
| Pig Iron        | 18.2                               | 25.5  |
| Iron            | 11.7                               | 17.1  |
| Steel           | 0.1                                | 1.1   |

TABLE 2: DEVELOPMENT OF RUSSIA'S INDUSTRIAL BASE

|                | Railways                      | Length of telegraph network    |
|----------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1871-75 ...    | 7500 versts opened            | 1855 ... 2,000 versts;         |
| 1876-1880 ...  | 3500 versts opened;           | 1880 ... 75,000 versts.        |
| So by 1881 ... | total mileage = 21,000 versts |                                |
| By 1895...     | total mileage = 33000 versts. | (1 verst = 0.66 miles approx.) |

|          | <b>Coal</b>           |          | <b>Iron Ore</b>                     |
|----------|-----------------------|----------|-------------------------------------|
| 1860 ... | 18.3 m poods mined;   | 1870 ... | 45.9 million poods;                 |
| 1870 ... | 42.4 m                | 1880 ... | 60.2 m                              |
| 1880 ... | 200.6 m               | 1890 ... | 106.3 m.                            |
| 1890 ... | 367.2 m.              |          |                                     |
|          |                       |          | <b>Production of Iron and Steel</b> |
|          |                       | 1860 ... | 12.4 million poods;                 |
|          | <b>Petroleum</b>      | 1870 ... | 14.5 m                              |
| 1860 ... | 0.6 m poods produced; | 1880 ... | 35.3                                |
| 1870 ... | 1.8 m                 | 1890 ... | 48.4.                               |
| 1880 ... | 34.0 m                |          |                                     |
| 1890 ... | 241.0.                |          |                                     |

### TABLE 3: THE BOOM OF THE 1890s

Between 1892 and 1900 Russia experienced a growth in production of 8½ % per year.  
From 1887 to 1897:

- the number of enterprises increased 26.3%;
- the number of workers increased 59.2%;
- the value of production increased 112.8%.

This growth was still based largely on heavy industry, with railroad building in the forefront.

| Years       | Length of network<br>[versts] | Freight carried<br>[poods/verst] |
|-------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1880-84 ... | 21,611                        | 125                              |
| 1885-89 ... | 24,882                        | 146                              |
| 1890-94 ... | 27,940                        | 166                              |
| 1895-98 ... | 34,161                        | 189                              |

1 verst = 0.66 miles approx.

#### Annual average production growth rates in various industries during the 1890s.

| Mining | Chemical | Lumber | Metallurgy | Ceramic | Textile | Food |
|--------|----------|--------|------------|---------|---------|------|
| 11.2   | 10.7     | 9.3    | 8.4        | 8.0     | 7.8     | 1.7  |

The bias towards heavy industry is further shown in the proportions of the produce of certain key industries going to different sectors:

#### Iron production for various purposes (million poods)

|              | 1890 | 1900 |
|--------------|------|------|
| Rails        | 10.1 | 30.3 |
| Roofing iron | 8.4  | 29.6 |

#### Coal: percentages of production going to various sectors, second half of the 1890s.

|                   |     |
|-------------------|-----|
| Transportation    | 36% |
| Metal plants      | 29% |
| Private consumers | 25% |
| Self-consumption  | 10% |

| Petrol        | 1893 | 1900 |
|---------------|------|------|
| million poods |      |      |

|   |       |       |
|---|-------|-------|
| Kerosene<br>(domestic)                          | 37.9  | 54.6  |
| Mazut (petrol<br>residue, industrial)           | 114.5 | 286.4 |
| All other oil pro-<br>ducts (mainly industrial) | 182.4 | 381   |

Corresponding to the production increases, the rates of growth of capital investment were most spectacular in mining, metal, chemicals, and ceramics. Textiles and food were a long way behind.

**TABLE 4: THE RUSSIAN WORKING CLASS IN THE 19th CENTURY**

| Factories employing more than 16 workers                                 |                     |
|--|---------------------|
| 1866 ...   | 2500 - 3000         |
| 1879 ...   | 4500                |
| 1890 ...   | 6000.               |
| <b>Number of workers engaged in manufacture, mining, and metallurgy.</b> |                     |
| Thousands:   |                     |
|  | In factory industry |
| 1865 ...   | 509                 |
| 1890 ...   | 840                 |
|  | In metal industry   |
|  | On railroads        |
|  | Total               |
|  | 32                  |
|  | 706                 |
|  | 1433                |

**TABLE 5: TAXATION**

| Year       | Government Taxation            |                                  |
|------------|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
|            | Direct Taxation Million Rubles | Indirect Taxation Million Rubles |
| 1880       | 172                            | 393                              |
| 1892       | 162                            | 533                              |
| 1909       | 228                            | 777                              |
| % Increase | 1880-1909                      | 32.5% 98%                        |

**Peasants' arrears as percentage of annual assessment**

| Provinces | 1871-75 | 1876-80 | 1881-85 | 1886-90 | 1891-95 | 1896 | 1898 |
|-----------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|------|------|
| Simbirsk  | 5       | 6       | 34      | 42      | 204     | 223  | 277  |
| Tula      | 3       | 5       | 16      | 35      | 134     | 151  | 244  |
| Kazan     | 4       | 31      | 101     | 170     | 370     | 334  | 418  |
| Orenburg  | 43      | 54      | 46      | 135     | 448     | 334  | 277  |
| Samara    | 48      | 59      | 152     | 210     | 433     | 315  | 363  |
| Ufa       | 25      | 40      | 77      | 208     | 336     | 360  | 397  |

**TABLE 6: GOVERNMENT SPENDING**

**Total Government Ordinary and Extra-Ordinary Expenditure [in 000's Rubles]**

| 1861-70   | 1894-1902  | 1908-1914  |
|-----------|------------|------------|
| 4,594,000 | 15,137,000 | 22,128,000 |

**Total Economic Expenditures**

|           |            |            |
|-----------|------------|------------|
| 2,091,000 | 10,611,000 | 12,223,000 |
|           | (9 years)  | (7 years)  |

**SOURCES FOR TABLES:**

Table 1 — K. Thalheim, "Russia's Economic Development", in Katkov et al, "Russia enters the Twentieth Century", p.89.

Tables 2, 3, 4, 5 — Florinsky, "History of the National Economy of Russia to 1917", and Lyashenko, "Russia, an Interpretation", volume II.

Table 6: Von Lane, "The State and the Economy", in Black, "The Transformation of Russian Society".

## NOTES FOR PARTS 1 AND 2

1. Struve saw "socialism (as a)... remote ideal, while the struggle for civil and political liberties was a vital task" — P. Struve, "My Contacts and Conflicts with Lenin", Slavonic Review, April 1934, pp. 576-577.
2. N. A. Berdyaev, "Dream and Reality", New York 1951, p. 108.
3. Quoted in A. P. Mendel, "Dilemmas of Progress in Tsarist Russia", Harvard 1961, p. 142.
4. Cited by Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 1, p. 501.
7. Struve, Slavonic Review, April 1934.
8. Quoted in Mendel op. cit., p. 145.
9. Quoted in Mendel op. cit., p. 145.
10. P. Struve, "Tekushchie voprosy", May 1897.
11. Quoted by Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 1, p. 497.
12. Quoted in Mendel, op. cit., p. 151.
13. Quoted in Mendel op. cit., p. 150.
14. Lenin, Collected Works, volume 3, pp. 56-58.
15. Lenin, Collected Works, vol. 3, p. 66.
16. Lenin, Collected Works, volume 1, pp. 112-113.
17. Certain economists have even argued that serfdom, as an institution, had less to do with the retardation of capitalism than the vast landmass of Russia with its scattered natural resources and consequent isolation of village communities and greatly restricted growth of a national market for large scale industry. For instance, Professor Baykov in "The Economic Development of Russia" (Economic History Review, 2nd Series, vii, 1954-55) argues this. He maintains that a modern transport system was a prerequisite to any large-scale industrial development. He points to the fact that there were 32 million people free of serf status (in new Russian territories in which serfdom had never existed, or had disappeared) and, therefore, if other factors favourable to growth had been present, serfdom would not have been a problem.  
However, those 32 million should not be seen as a homogenous mass from which a large supply of wage labour could have been extracted. They were scattered over vast territories and were often as immobile and unresponsive to monetary incentives (had these been offered) as the serfs. The question was one of the whole institutional structure within which serfdom was encapsulated, not just serfdom.
18. Before 1861, there were 78 joint stock companies in Russia, with a total capital of 72 million rubles. From 1861 to 1873, 357 joint stock companies were set up, with a total stock capital of 1116 million rubles. Of these, 73 were banks (226.9 million rubles), 53 were railway companies (689.5 million rubles), and 163 were strictly industrial (128.9 million rubles). By 1877 government railroad loans had reached 1833 million rubles (Lyashenko, "History of the National Economy of Russia to 1917", p. 490-491).
19. Lyashenko, op. cit., p. 527
20. Florinsky, "Russia, an Interpretation", volume II.
21. Lyashenko, op. cit., p. 420.
22. Von Lane, "The State and the Economy", in Black, "The Transformation of Russian Society".

23. By 1900 foodstuffs, mainly grain, constituted about two-thirds of total exports. Of grain produced in 1861-65, 4.6% went for export. By 1871-75, the figure had reached 9.1%, and by 1875-97, it was up to 14% or 16% (Florinsky, op. cit.).
24. Witte's 1893 budget speech, quoted in Von Lane, op. cit.
25. It is sometimes contended that Russian and foreign industrial and bank investments were replacing the state in the pre-war period; but the annual rate of growth of government economic expenditure increased in the boom of 1908-14, long after Witte had resigned. See Table 6.
26. T. Kemp, "Industrialisation in 19th Century Europe".
27. From J. G. Gliksman, "The Russian Urban Worker: from Serf to Proletarian", in Black, "The Transformation of Russian Society".
28. Kemp, op. cit., p. 202.
29. By 1913 Russia was:
- the fifth nation in the world in terms of industrial output;
  - fourth largest steel producer;
  - third largest consumer of cotton;
  - fourth largest producer of cotton;
  - second largest petroleum producer;
  - fourth in terms of gold production;
  - fourth in the production of industrial machinery;
  - and the sixth largest producer of electrical equipment.

The areas covered are not comparable, but by 1913, the overall length of the Russian rail network (62,000 km) was about the same as that of the German network.

# Trotskyism in Vietnam

THE FOLLOWING INTERVIEW was obtained in Paris during the summer of 1977. In it the comrades of the Vietnamese Bolshevik-Leninist Group describe their politics and activity. The only other readily available source of information in the English language on Vietnamese Trotskyism is the pamphlet "Stalinism and Trotskyism in Vietnam", published by the Spartacist tendency, on which the VBLG comrades comment in the interview.

The VBLG is a direct successor of the Vietnamese Trotskyist groups which exerted considerable influence in the 1940s until they were almost annihilated physically by the Stalinists. The I-CL is not in political agreement with the VBLG, a group which generally aligns itself with the international majority of the USFI. The VBLG is, however, the only group we know of conducting a struggle against the bureaucracy in Vietnam from a working-class communist point of view. It is an act of elementary solidarity to make their existence and their views known. And the fact that it falls to us to carry out that task is a severe condemnation of the United Secretariat of the Fourth International and their political opportunism in relation to Vietnamese Stalinism.



**I-CL:** Is the account of the history of Vietnamese Trotskyism given in the Spartacist pamphlet on "Stalinism and Trotskyism in Vietnam" accurate and complete?

**VBLG:** It is not quite accurate in the way it compares the 'La Lutte' group and the 'October' group. It gives the impression that the 'October' group was more to the left. But it is based only on the material available in French or English, particularly an article in 'Quatrieme Internationale' by Lucien, who was a member of the 'October' group. We have documents in Vietnamese which show the question in a different light.

**I-CL:** The Spartacists argue that the 'La Lutte' group had a consistently opportunist attitude towards Stalinism, shown by its bloc with the Stalinists in 1936. In the 1946-7 period, this opportunism led them to concentrate entirely on efforts for a united front with the Stalinists, instead of arming themselves to fight not only imperialism but also, if necessary, the Stalinists. Thus they easily fell victim to the Stalinist repression.

**VBLG:** On a military level that may be true, but politically no. We think that the attitudes of the October group led to isolation from the masses, and revolutionaries must be close to the masses. The book of Hemery is valuable in this context.

The 'La Lutte' group had more influence among workers and intellectuals whereas the 'October' group was sectarian and limited to workers.

**I-CL:** Do you still have comrades in Vietnam?

**VBLG:** Yes, there are some comrades in Vietnam but communication is very difficult. The Vietnamese Communist Party knows that these comrades are Trotskyists but we don't know

whether they have taken any measures against them or not.

At the time of the Paris Accords the Saigon comrades sent us a document in which they expressed a line close to that of the SWP. We wrote a reply.

I-CL: What is your other activity and perspectives?

VBLG: We have 15 to 20 comrades in France, mostly in Paris. We publish a review in Vietnamese, 'The Observer', monthly. We have some relations with the LCR and the USFI and we try when we can to get contact with other Trotskyist organisations.

We translate key documents of Trotskyism into Vietnamese and try to get them into Vietnam and we do work in the Vietnamese community in France. But we are very isolated.

I-CL: What are your present relations with the USFI?

VBLG: Practically none.

I-CL: Have you been invited to the 11th World Congress?

VBLG: We do not know whether we have been invited. We have never received a reply to the letter we sent to the USFI before the 10th World Congress. But we still try to keep contact. We have had discussions with Pierre Rousset and with Johnson of the SWP.

I-CL: The I-CL, Lutte Ouvrière and some other groups have recently begun to organise a series of conferences open to all Trotskyist organisations. Would the VBLG be interested in participating in these conferences? It would be a way of making the existence of a Vietnamese Trotskyist grouping and the debate on Trotskyists' attitude to Vietnam, more widely known in the Trotskyist movement.

VBLG: Yes.

I-CL: You say that you find Pierre Rousset's analysis of the VCP opportunist and the SWP's analysis too mechanical. What is your analysis?

VBLG: There are two problems: the struggle for national independence and the struggle for socialism. The VCP is a party of Stalinist origin, and its methods of organisation are very Stalinist. But they have engaged a mass struggle against imperialism and acquired a certain degree of political independence from Russia and China. Thus they have been able to solve the problem of national independence. But not the problem of socialism, which requires the leading role of the working class.

The VCP uses the apparatus of the party to mobilise the masses on nationalist slogans. Johnson said in discussion with us that the VCP could not even win national independence, but we contest that. Today the VCP talks of socialism — but they don't talk about the independent role of the working class. It is a similar development to China and Yugoslavia. The difference between us and Rousset is that we say that Stalinist parties can go further than anticipated, even to a break with the bourgeoisie (as Trotsky mentioned the possibility), but we deny that they can build socialism. The Vietnamese state is evolving towards a structure similar to Eastern Europe.

Up to 1954 the VCP followed a strictly Stalinist line, in our opinion. After the 20th Congress, the VCP sought a midway position between the USSR and China — acting in a nationalist sense, not a revolutionary sense. They still hold to 'socialism in one country'. We disagree with Rousset because he only sees the objective side of the matter, in which the VCP has played an internationalist role through the international impact of the struggle in Vietnam. Subjectively the VCP have never been internationalists.

I-CL: What is your analysis of the process by which Vietnam became a deformed workers' state? You compared it to China: how do you situate yourselves in relation to the various Trotskyist analyses of China?

VBLG: China is a deformed workers' state. But unlike the Eastern European states it was created through mass armed struggle. The Communist Party of China has abandoned many traditional Stalinist concepts and thus conquered power, but they still remain Stalinist in their exercise of power. They are not Stalinist in that they did not subordinate themselves directly to

the USSR.

After 1954 the VCP shifted from traditional Stalinist positions above all under the pressure of imperialism, fearing to lose their contact with the masses. They mobilise the masses, even including the working class — within bureaucratic limits, and not permitting the autonomy of the working class. Comrades who have been in Vietnam tell us that the VCP is now trying to base itself on the poorest elements in the villages — all within the limits of bureaucratic control. There is discontent among the petty bourgeoisie in Saigon who have found their privileges curtailed, who find for example that students from poor backgrounds have preference for entry to university over students from more prosperous backgrounds. This shows that Lutte Ouvrière is wrong. The VCP is not controlled by the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie.

The VCP's policy can work for a time. But problems will come up, for example over reunification. The Eurocommunism debate will have an impact in the VCP. There will be a crisis in the party sooner or later, but we can't say when. There have always been two distinct tendencies in the party, in the South and in the North.

But we affirm — as against Rousset — that the VCP cannot transform itself. A political revolution is necessary.

A bureaucracy existed even during the war, though its privileges in absolute terms were slight. It will solidify with economic reconstruction. Rousset does not really recognise the existence of this bureaucracy as we have defined above.

As regards China, we think Peng is too sectarian. For example, he gives a major importance to the question of Formosa, saying that because of Formosa the national unification of China has not yet been completed. This is petty.

I-CL: What appreciation did you have of the Cultural Revolution?

VBLG: It is difficult to get a clear picture. But it appears that it was an affair controlled from above, with bureaucratic methods. In a certain sense Mao was fighting against bureaucracy, but then Stalin also waged campaigns against bureaucracy from time to time.

The book of Denise Avenas is the best analysis we know on China.

I-CL: What is your analysis of Cambodia?

VBLG: It is difficult to get information. But it appears to be another case of the tragic results of the policy of 'socialism in one country'. They are trying to build a sort of agrarian socialism.

I-CL: What do you think is the class nature of Cambodia?

VBLG: We don't know because we cannot get information on that.

I-CL: Do any independent working class organisations still exist in South Vietnam? Are there any signs of independent working class activity (strikes etc) there or in North Vietnam?

VBLG: Everything is under the control of the VCP. We know of no strikes. The population has a lot of confidence in the VCP, although there is some petty bourgeois opposition. The VCP puts out a lot of nationalist propaganda.

I-CL: What do you see as the tasks for Trotskyists in Vietnam?

VBLG: A revolutionary party is needed, but it does not exist. An ideological and political struggle is needed. But we have to recognise that we are starting from nothing.

The VCP does not fear bourgeois or petty bourgeois parties, but it does fear those to its left.

# Reviews

## Race and the Labour left

SAM RICHARDSON reviews "RED, WHITE, AND BLACK — RACE RELATIONS IN BRITAIN", by Sidney Bidwell MP [published by Gordon and Cremonesi, London 1976, £5.90]

This book is important not for what it says but for who is saying it. Sidney Bidwell has been Labour MP for Southall since 1966. In that time he has been a prominent spokesman for the left Tribunitie group of MP's — he was chairman at the time he wrote this book — and is generally acknowledged as the left Labour spokesman on racism. Since its formation in 1968, he has been a member of the All Party Parliamentary Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration. He is the only MP to have sat on both the standing committees which considered the 1968 and 1976 Race Relations Acts. He abstained on the 1968 Commonwealth Immigration Act, despite the fact that it was his party that was introducing it. Last year he successfully introduced and promoted a private member's bill on the right of Sikhs to wear turbans on motor bikes. He has spoken and written on numerous occasions inside and outside Parliament on 'race relations'. In short he is probably the most well known and respected Labour MP on the question of race in the country.

Michael Foot, in his Foreword to this book, points out that Bidwell "was nurtured in the trade union movement, and has been able to apply to race problems all the experience he acquired in industrial organisation and different forms of trade union education". Add to this Bidwell's own admission that "Above all, my words are directed to my fellow trade unionists" (p. 4), and you start to understand just what this book is all about. For this book, published as it was in November 1976, is a very timely publication. November 1976 was the month that the new Race Relations Bill became an Act. It was the month in which the TUC/Labour Party campaign march against racialism was held. Even the slogan of the month on the calendar of the London Co-Op Political Committee was "No Racial Discrimination". The coincidence of the events might be accidental but the coincidence of the politics is not. The book's message is the same as the Co-Op's — "No Racial Discrimination". It is the same as that of the Act — law is fundamental in ending discrimination. It is the same as the TUC/Labour Party campaign — the labour movement needs to involve itself more in realising the aim of no discrimination.

This book is written by a man who is of the trade unions and the race relations industry at a time when the latter is making increasing headway in the former with its policies and proposals. One of the most important ways of doing this is the new Race Relations Act. What better than a man who helped give birth to the new Act and who, like the TUC and the trade union leaders opposed the idea of race relations on employment back in 1966 to sell it to them now. What better than a man schooled in the ways of 'good race relations' and the traditions, structures and prejudices of the labour movement to act as a transmission belt from the race relations industry to the unions and the Labour Party.

Bidwell's book, however, as well as serving a function, illustrates, indeed typifies, an attitude — the attitude of the left Labour and Trade Union bureaucrats. Take immigration. Back in 1962 the Labour Party under the liberal right winger Gaitskell opposed Commonwealth (new and old) immigration. Bidwell describes this opposition as "starry-eyed" and "idealist" and pleads that "on the question of immigration and race relations, we badly need to be released from the hands of the idealists." The realists, into whose hands he seeks to deliver

us, may be described as scientific socialists; but it is the socialism of left nationalism and the science of people who can only count. Behind his plea for humanitarian non-racialist controls lurk the questions of how many immigrants can be absorbed and how many are required. Despite the left face, Bidwell considers it correct to approach the issue of the movement of peoples in terms of the labour needs of the British capitalist economy. Of course he does not say this explicitly — he says very little ‘explicitly’. But the various facts, figures, quotations and comments he makes leave us in little doubt as to his position. For instance, “In 1967 the number of Commonwealth immigrants entering Britain to settle totalled 61,377; in 1970 the total had fallen to 29,886. It should be emphasised that from 1962 entry was controlled by voucher and was related to work available”(p.51). Of course, as most ‘realist’ Labourites do, he neglects to discuss the argument that any immigration controls because they identify foreign labour as alien and threatening, buttress racism — particularly when, as in Britain, the word immigrant means black. Indeed Bidwell does not question the role of immigration controls either generally or, as in the case of Britain, where there is a net emigration.

However it is on the issue of the trade unions themselves that Bidwell reveals fully his trade union bureaucrat’s frame of mind. Ask any ‘left’ trade union official with an axe to grind to criticise the unions and he will do so readily. His criticism, though, will be selective, superficial and laced with apologetics. This is Bidwell’s treatment of the unions and racism.

He admits neglect, sluggishness, cases where ‘sometimes’ an “underlying discriminatory bias” is “all too evident” and offers examples to prove it. But, being concerned to prompt the unions to take up discrimination more vigorously without fundamentally changing their practices or traditions, his criticisms are very muted. He selects from among the numerous examples available those which do not call into question the racist bias of the traditions, structures and practices of the unions. Thus the disputes at Courtauld’s in Preston, Woolf’s in Southall, Mansfield Hosiery in Nottingham and Imperial Typewriters in Leicester are merely noted as examples of “the organised efforts that coloured workers have made”. (p.61) He wants to encourage union officials to adopt “equal opportunity policies”, start ‘race relations’ departments, take more black officials into their ranks etc. Bidwell does not want a self-accounting of the record of the unions on racism; he wants a managing policy, as advised by the Race Relations industry, to be taken up by the trade union officials. At a time when the trade union officials are being drawn into management generally, such a view fits in nicely. Most offensive, though, is Bidwell’s attitude to black people. Patronage is typical of all British officialdom. The trade union officials might present a variation on this theme, but it is patronage nevertheless. The unions and Labour Party have over the years advocated that ‘immigrants’ should be educated in the ways of the unions. Studies of ‘immigrants in industry’ never tire of repeating that most disputes are a result of ‘communication problems’ and a lack of education of immigrants in the good industrial relations practices which are the second nature to any union official. Bidwell reiterates these themes, warning the unions that “unless ethnic minorities get fair play, they will be obliged to organise and fight as ethnic minorities”.(p.44)

He wants unions to recognise that black workers really do have special problems and their ‘integration’ and ‘education’ require recognition of these. The unity of the working class is still to be achieved by black workers learning the good old ways of the trade unions, but it is to be done with greater sensitivity. The recognition of racial oppression as an extra burden and the need for white working class support and solidarity is thus corrupted by Bidwell, and reduced to a series of administrative changes and a plea for greater understanding. Nowhere is there any recognition that the lessons of self-organisation and direct action can be learnt from black workers. Likewise, there is no proposal to purge the labour movement itself of racism, nor a recognition that it needs to prove itself by supporting black workers before full unity can be achieved. Racial oppression is trivialised and individuated into a series of isolated instances of discrimination, lack of equal opportunity and disadvantage; all amenable to administrative measures involving only slight changes in the status quo.

Coupled with this is a condescending attitude to black power and black youth. “If blacks are ever to fit into British society, and we are very worried about the young ones right now, they must win positions in this society”.(p.30) Though Bidwell claims to understand the “Creature comfort afforded by ‘black power’”, he believes it out of place in Britain, even “laughable”. In fact, what is laughable is the foolishness of someone like Bidwell, who cannot even distinguish clearly between the politics of President Amin, Haile Selassie, Michael X, Derek Humphrey and Gus John — authors of “Because They’re Black” and Robert Moore — author of “White Racism and Black Resistance”.

“Red, White and Black” — like the self-styled “Red” Sid Bidwell — is not what it promises to be. The table of contents lists the most important issues relevant to racism. The Foreword

by Michael Foot promises an 'expert' treatment of the subject. Bidwell himself describes the book in his introduction as a "narrative about race by a socialist". What we are given is a selection of rambling, disjointed writings, whose only unity is Bidwell the author, with all his prejudices, hobby horses and anecdotes. The book is also tainted with a sickening parliamentary language, which acts as a constant reminder of the fetishistic nature of that place for the British Labour movement. Even Bidwell's claim that "No other MP had yet written on the subject in such depth" is disputable. After all, Liberal MP David Steel wrote a book called "No Entry" which is arguably a better piece on an issue which comes under the heading 'race relations'. All in all, the only value in reading the book is to know what an important labour movement race relations 'leader' is saying to his co-thinkers in the labour movement on the issues of race and immigration at a time when they are likely to be listening to him.

# Blanqui as precursor of Marx

CHRIS REYNOLDS reviews "BLANQUI", by Maurice Dommange [EDI, Paris, 1970].

FRENCH SOCIALIST politics, English economic science, and German philosophy: these were the three sources from which Marxism took its starting point. But, of the major tendencies of French socialism, most, despite their critique of capitalist society and their advocacy of a new social order, were eventually hostile or indifferent to the proletarian class struggle: Cabet, Saint-Simon, Fourier, Louis Blanc, Proudhon. It was only the tendency of Auguste Blanqui that embodied a continuous link between the primitive socialism of the most radical currents of the French Revolution and the modern working class movement.

In English there is only one book on Blanqui — an unenlightening and laborious effort (Samuel Bernstein, "Auguste Blanqui and the Art of Insurrection", Lawrence and Wishart). Maurice Dommange's terse booklet ("Blanqui", EDI, Paris 1970) contains in 91 pages a sharper, clearer, and, finally, more informative account of Blanqui's life and ideas. Only ignorance of the French language can justify turning instead to Bernstein's book.

Blanqui entered radical politics in 1824, at the age of 19. By 1827 he had received two sword wounds and a bullet in the neck in the course of street fighting. Active in the revolution of 1830, he was sentenced in 1832 to a year in prison. In the dock, when asked his profession, he replied simply: "Proletarian".

In 1836-7 he was imprisoned again. In 1837-9 he organised an insurrectionary secret society, the Society of the Seasons. Its attempt at insurrection in 1839 failed. Blanqui was eventually arrested and remained in prison until the revolution of February 1848.

"The edifice of privilege, without a stone less, with some phrases and a few banners added" was his assessment of the regime of the Provisional Government. On 15th May the Paris workers with Raspail and Blanqui at their head invaded the National Assembly; but their leaders were arrested. Blanqui remained in prison until 1859 and then again from 1861 to 1865.

Being held in Paris for the later years of his imprisonment, he was able to begin re-forming a revolutionary organisation. On 14th August 1870, trying to take advantage of the Franco-Prussian War, the Blanquists staged an uprising. It failed completely. On 17th March 1871, the day before the working class seized power in Paris, Blanqui was once again arrested.

In 1879 he was amnestied and once again set about agitation and organisation. Only his death, on 1st January 1881, removed him from the struggle. Later, at the turn of the century, the Blanquist party was to be one of the components of the united Socialist Party of France.

Dommaget's book fails to show clearly the evolution of Blanqui's ideas. Its ample quotations from Blanqui bring out the fact, however, that his was not another variety of utopian socialism:

"It is one of our most grotesque presumptions for us barbarians and ignoramuses to pose as legislators for future generations. Those generations, for whom we take the trouble to feel anxiety and prepare safeguards, will render us a hundred-fold the pity which the caveman inspires in us, and their pity will be far more justified than ours.... Let us leave the future to itself.... Let us turn our gaze from these far-off prospects which weary the eye and brain for nothing, and resume our struggle against the sophisms of enslavement."

And Blanqui's hostility to empty speculations was coupled with an equal hostility to unthinking optimism:

"Don't be drawn into looking at things from the good side.... It is better to be contradicted for the better than the worse. The illusion of well-being is deadly."

Despite his insurrectionary perspective, Blanqui was not indifferent to the mass struggles of the working class:

"The strike is intelligible to everyone; it is the simple idea of resistance to oppression. Everyone rallies to it.

"Cooperation, in its various forms of credit society or producers' association, is a complex notion which can attract already-developed intelligences, but frightens off the ignorant and simple. It will find scarcely ten partisans, and the strike ten thousand."

"For the one, generality, for the other rare exceptions. Is not the flag which rallies the masses preferable to the one which only groups a few individuals?

"The strike is the only really popular weapon in the struggle against capital.

"Basing themselves provisionally on the strike as a means of defence against the oppression of capital, the popular masses should concentrate all their efforts towards political changes, recognising that only those changes can effect a social transformation and the sharing-out of production according to justice..."

Blanqui's idea of the political changes necessary epitomises both the strongest and the weakest elements of his political doctrine. Against all variants of reformism, anarchism and utopianism he upheld the necessity of revolution and of the dictatorship of the proletariat. He never, however, established a link between the struggles and organisation of the working class within capitalism and the political form of the dictatorship of the proletariat. He could see no other possibility than that this dictatorship would be a provisional government of the insurrectionary minority, who would then arm the working class and break the apparatus of bourgeois rule (particularly, for Blanqui, the church) and educate the workers in a communist spirit.

The problem was finally only to be solved by the Soviets(workers' councils) of 1905 and 1917. But it was the theory of Marx and Engels, and not that of Blanqui, which prepared the way for solving the problem. Although in 1848 Marx and Engels identified with Blanqui's formula of the dictatorship of the proletariat, as early as the March Address of 1850 they were beginning to pose the problem of workers' power in a different way:

"During and after the struggle the workers must at every opportunity put forward their own demands against those of the bourgeois democrats... Alongside the new official governments they must simultaneously establish their own revolutionary workers' governments, either in the form of local executive committees and councils or through workers' clubs and committees, so that the bourgeois democratic governments not only immediately lose the support of the workers but find themselves from the very beginning supervised and threatened by authorities behind which stand the whole mass of the workers."

The criticisms levelled by Marx and Engels against Blanqui are always tempered by a profound respect. Later, the whole school of Kautskyite Marxism was to make of Blanquism a scarecrow and an anathema — used to deprecate the revolutionary spirit of the 1848-50 writings of Marx and Engels, and to polemicise against those, like Lenin, who embodied that revolutionary spirit. That conception of Blanquism has passed into Marxist "received wisdom". But Dommaget's summary is more persuasive:

"What then is surprising in the fact that the disciples of Blanqui... sought in Marx a supplement of social and revolutionary information? The violent conquest of power by the working class; the class struggle and its role in history; the rejection of all palliatives in the present and all recipes for the future; the necessity of a dictatorship of the proletariat during the period of transition from capitalism to socialism; the emergence of communism from economic and political evolution; the critique of universal suffrage, of "parliamentary cretinism", of democratic hypocrisy: did not Blanqui formulate all these tenets of Marx? But this time, they were coordinated and systematised with a higher logic."

# The Left and Scottish nationalism

'AUL DEMUTH reviews Neil Williamson's "SOCIALISTS AND THE NEW RISE OF SCOTTISH NATIONALISM" [A Red Weekly Battle of Ideas supplement].

THE 'NATIONAL Question' in Scotland has risen to the forefront of political life recently. The Scottish Nationalist Party has achieved the most spectacular growth of any political party in Britain, virtually wiping out the Tories' electoral base in Scotland, and making serious inroads into the Labour vote. The rejection by the House of Commons of the White Paper on devolution was instrumental in precipitating the recent threat to the existence of the Labour government.

And the Scottish question has brought out the worst in all concerned. While a rampant petit-bourgeois nationalism rages in Scotland, the Tribune MPs who voted for the Social Contract and for massive cuts in public spending trooped into the hobbies to vote against devolution. Following their British chauvinism in the EEC referendum, they wanted to defend "our nation" from disintegration at the hands of the nationalists.

The growth of nationalism in Scotland has forced the far left to take a position one way or the other. The SWP/IS have come out against devolution and against separation. But with their usual economism, they have in the main ignored the issue, while Socialist Worker bravely maintains that the only issues of importance to the working class are the latest activities of the SWP. But if Socialist Worker has simply ignored nationalism in the hope that it will go away, Red Weekly, reflecting the Fourth International's unending search for some current of history where it can find a niche, has decided that the demand for a Scottish Assembly has a progressive content on which they can hitch their star. On this basis,

supporters of Red Weekly joined the Scottish Labour Party, the left wing of which, after the split with Sillars, has been renamed the Scottish Socialist League. In a futile attempt to beat the nationalists at their own game, the SSL dishes up a confused mess of "action programmes for Scotland", demands that Scotland leaves the EEC while not separating from the rest of Britain, and calls for a "Scottish Workers' Government".

What is behind the rise of the SNP? Scotland's historical development followed a peculiar path. The Union of the Parliaments of 1707 united the Scottish and English bourgeoisies in the exploitation of the colonies, coveted by a Scottish merchant capital unable to develop a colonial system of its own.

The early date of the Union, together with its nature as a voluntary alliance, meant that nationalism never had time to develop as a mass force in Scotland. Since 1707, apart from the Highland-based 1745 rebellion, nationalism has been a minority tendency, limited to a few dreamy nationalists and cranky intellectuals. Because of the early solution of the national question in Scotland, the fact that Scotland developed as a "nation" as part of the British nation-state and the lack of national oppression, even the revolutionary Jacobinism which swept Western Europe after the French Revolution only gained a toe-hold in Scotland. On the other hand, the fact that there had been a Scottish bourgeoisie before the Union and the development of elements of a national culture meant that the nationalism which

was to erupt two and three quarters centuries later had a certain identity on which to fix its talons. It is these "national vestiges" of a past which allows the present movement in Scotland to take the form of a particularly jingoistic and gaudy nationalism, masking its political content as a degenerate regional particularism.

But the root of the growth of the SNP does not lie in any struggle against national oppression. It lies rather in the regional problems of Scotland as a depressed section of British capitalism. The traditional industries in Scotland have been dying out since the beginning of this century (in the case of iron-ore mining the demise came even earlier). The Scottish bourgeoisie, unable to compete with its English neighbour on the world market, began to turn to investment abroad, building on the strong traditions of finance capitalism in Scotland which dates back to the development of merchant capital on the eastern and western seaboards as the dominant sector of the Scottish economy. By 1914, Scottish finance capital was a disproportionate sector of British finance capital as a whole; today ½ of British capital deployed in portfolio investment is owned by Scottish business. However, while this confirmed Scotland as an integral part of British imperialism, the decline of Scottish manufacturing industry did not lead to any equivalent replacement, with consequent high unemployment in Scotland and acute social deprivation, especially in Glasgow. The investment grants doled out by the British government merely led to an influx of capital intensive industry,

which realised large profits, but had little effect on the unemployment figures.

This situation, together with the betrayals of the Labour Party and the lack of any credible revolutionary alternative for the Scottish working class, made it inevitable that regionalism would gain a hearing. But the real factor was North Sea Oil. The SNP, having languished as an irrelevant sect since 1934, could present the prospect of an independent Scotland armed with North Sea Oil revenue as a way out of regional deprivation and the economic crisis. Fighting the October 1974 election on the slogan "It's Scotland's Oil", they gained 11 MP's at Westminster and could well make a sweep at the next election.

This "new" Scottish nationalism is thoroughly reactionary; no less so than British nationalism. Its entire logic is to bind the Scottish working class to the bourgeoisie in the futile search for a class-collaborationist paradise at the expense of the "foreigners" i.e. the workers of England and Wales. There is no democratic thrust to it, nothing which revolutionaries can support. Unlike the situation in genuinely oppressed nations, where the Marxist programme can subsume within it the progressive elements of nationalism, the situation in Scotland is stark and bold — either the fight for proletarian internationalism or Scottish nationalism. Any accommodation to this reactionary particularism is a defeat in the fight for revolutionary consciousness.

To fit the square peg of nationalism into the round hole of rationalism is precisely the aim of Neil Williamson's article. The coercion necessary to achieve this not only produces political confusion, but is attained even at the expense of formal logic.

Williamson gives a sound analysis of the contradictions of regional policy in Scotland, which started off as an attempt to solve the problem of chronic unemployment and ended up as a bonanza for international capital. The nature of this attempt at 'planning' the inately anarchic capitalist system of production is behind the Scottish CBI's view of devolution — while on the one hand joining hands with the chauvinists of UCATT in the "Scotland is British" campaign,

they are strongly in favour of "industrial devolution" i.e. massive free handouts in incentives to Scottish industry.

It is when he comes to deal with the question of the Scottish Assembly that Williamson's analysis goes haywire. We are treated to a series of truisms as to the hold of illusions in bourgeois democracy over the mass of the British workers. We are warned against the "naive idea that such deep-seated illusions among working people can be challenged purely by propaganda in favour of Soviet democracy". We have to link our propaganda to "the direct experience of working people themselves". The "actual state of class consciousness" of the Scottish working class is to support the demand for an Assembly, so hey presto, we should support the setting up of an Assembly, while, of course, arguing that it must adopt "socialist policies".

The stricture about "making propaganda in favour of Soviet democracy" are presumably aimed at the SWP, whose abstract praise of the wonders of socialism is totally unrelated to the day-to-day work of their organisation. But this is not because the SWP does not support the setting up of a Scottish Assembly (indeed their position on this is much healthier than Red Weekly's) but because they have no conception of a Marxist programme which can link the work in the working class with the struggle for workers' power.

In fact it is Williamson's analysis which is totally at the level of vapid abstractions. His polemics may have some point if directed at an ultra-left refusal to relate to the institutions of bourgeois democracy, but when it comes to the real question for socialists in Scotland — what attitude to take to the demand for an Assembly — he is just irrelevant. He fails to ask why many Scottish workers have joined the SNP, why many workers outside the SNP support the setting up of an Assembly. Of course at the root of it is a deep-seated "desire for change" (this is true of any political movement, including fascism), and tells us precisely nothing about what attitude to take towards it. The logic of Williamson's argument is to say, "People want change, so we'll go along with them; nationalism exists; we must adapt to it". However, this desire for change is

expressed as a reactionary particularism based on illusions that an oil-fired Assembly can solve the problems of international capitalism within the framework of a devolved or independent Scotland. The task of socialists in Scotland must be to fight these illusions with everything at our disposal. To give any support whatsoever to the Assembly is to fail to fight these illusions, in fact it is to go along with them.

And it is no use wriggling out of clearly fighting against nationalism by holding up the excuse that you are "fighting for democratic rights". For Marxists the fight for democratic rights is not some abstract principle to be mechanically applied on every possible occasion. We fight for democratic rights where undemocratic practices on the part of the state suppress the development of a nation, calling forth a struggle amongst the masses of the people. The fight for the highest democracy enables the working class to organise in trade unions and political organisations, and provides the best terrain for workers to come to see the naked antagonism between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. A clear lead in the struggle for democratic rights enables revolutionaries to draw new layers of the population into struggle, to fight for revolutionary politics amongst "newly radicalised" layers of the population.

But this is not the nature of the fight for a Scottish Assembly. Here there is none of the revolutionary dynamic to be found, say, in the struggles for constituent assemblies in Euzkadi and Catalonia. Instead, behind the demand for the Assembly are all the reactionary traits of petit-bourgeois nationalism in an imperialist country. This is not a case where revolutionaries can just fight for "democratic rights" and make propaganda within the struggle. There is no progressive content to Scottish nationalism, we can only be either for it or against it. All Williamson's talk of "democracy" is so much camouflage for Red Weekly's capitulation to this reactionary nationalism.

The same is true of Red Weekly's strident proclamation of Scotland's right to self-determination. Of course no democrat, never mind socialist, would disagree that the Scottish people have the right to decide whether or not to remain

part of Britain. But just to say this is to avoid taking a clear position on nationalism, is to adapt to it. In Scotland the SSL, in which Red Weekly is the dominant political influence, have limited themselves to taking this position. This comfortably allows them to bob along like a cork on the wave of nationalism, while doing nothing to fight it.

Williamson rounds off by slagging everyone who disagrees with him. The usual Red Weekly blanket diagnosis of the problems of the British left is served up — those who take a clear stand against nationalism are “economists”, “long accustomed by traditions of syndicalism to analysing and acting upon only the most direct questions

connected with the factory process”. While this lament carries some weight as a criticism of the SWP, it hardly follows that if, like the I-CL, you are against devolution, against separation, and against any form of Scottish nationalism, you think the Scottish question “irrelevant”. Far from it, the fact that it is so relevant makes it all the more important for revolutionaries to fight against Scottish nationalism.

Finally, Williamson accuses those on the far left who are against devolution of partaking in “a strange alliance with the Tribune group, whose members make up the bulk of the 70-odd Labour MP's opposed to devolution”. This is

simply a slander. The Tribunites opposed devolution on the basis of philistine British chauvinism. Of course the I-CL fights against such chauvinism. That is why, while fighting against nationalism, we call for a referendum on independence and devolution, while fighting for a “no” vote on both counts. In no way would we have any alliance with Tribune chauvinism. In fact it was Red Weekly, by its refusal to fight for a referendum on the issue to be held in Scotland that denied the Scottish people the right to self-determination. For their demands for direct elections to an Assembly simply meant foisting nationalist demands on the Scottish people whether they liked it or not.

# Apartheid and capitalism

TOM HARRISON reviews Martin Legassick and David Hemson's “FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND THE REPRODUCTION OF RACIAL CAPITALISM IN SOUTH AFRICA” [Anti-Apartheid Movement pamphlet, 50p].

Capitalism has always sought to mask its exploitative character, particularly when its exploitation has assumed the most naked and brutal forms. In the heyday of European imperialism the subjugation of the mass of humanity by the colonial powers was justified with arguments that the exploiters were raising the ‘natives’ to higher standards of ‘civilisation’, ‘justice’ and ‘enlightenment’. With the dissolution of Empires however, it has become necessary for the exploiters to put on new masks. A western company seeking government contracts in Nigeria or Zambia cannot justify its business activities in white-ruled Southern Africa by reciting verses from Kipling to its prospective black clients.

To the majority of the world's peoples and governments South

Africa is the number one pariah state, and consequently imperialist capital has to assume fresh disguises for its operations in the territories controlled by the apartheid regime. The multinational companies mining for uranium in Namibia do so under false company names, but such sleight of hand behaviour offers nothing in the way of morally sanctifying foreign capital's activities in South Africa.

Foreign capital cleanses itself instead by arguing firstly that, like the blacks, it is itself a prisoner of the racist regime and its desires to improve the lot of its employees are severely limited by South African law. Secondly, the activity of the multi-nationals is progressive in that the continued economic growth it fosters will increase the material benefits of the masses, force the government

to end discrimination in employment and generally exert a favourable influence on the state to come to its senses and terminate racist legislation.

The alleged programme of the foreign capitalists is one of reforming South African capitalism in order to avert the prospect of a revolutionary overthrow of the regime. Their argument is the only possible one in the circumstances and US Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Cyrus Vance has been its most recent champion. When asked whether he would be pressurising American companies to withdraw their investments from South Africa Vance answered that in his view American investment could be “a constructive force achieving racial justice in South Africa,” and added that he would like to see it increased. Yet this line of reasoning is design-

ed not in the first instance to reform apartheid, but to absolve foreign capital of all responsibility for participating in the creation and development of the apartheid system. A recognition of foreign capital's role in this respect is vital to an understanding of South Africa today. Describing exactly how foreign investment reproduces 'racial capitalism' in South Africa is the initial task Legassick and Hemson set themselves in this new AAM pamphlet.

Apartheid in South Africa is often presented by bourgeois journalists and historians as some kind of aberration from the "normal" path of capitalist development. It suits these people to regard racialism in general as 'irrational' and totally divorced from material circumstances. In South Africa where racist ideology is more rigorously carried to the level of the state than in any other country (with the possible exception of Israel) it can only be at variance with capitalism, since capital 'knows no colour.' Such an argument cannot be combatted by purely quantitative analyses of Foreign investment in South Africa, analyses which are quite common in anti-apartheid circles. The authors of this pamphlet are quite correct in maintaining that it simply isn't a question of asking how much foreign investment but what foreign investment actually does in determining not only the economic but also the social and political nature of South African society.

The apartheid system operates in order to reduce the cost of production and reproduction of labour power. The commodity, labour power, is separated from the household located in the "reserves", or as the South African government would have us believe, "newly independent states" in the making such as the Transkei. The workers contracted to labour in the mines or in factories located in the areas bordering the Bantustans, are paid a wage which will enable them to meet their own immediate needs (these 'needs' are calculated on the minimum possible basis by the employers), but not the needs of their families. In the Bantustans, both the cost of producing the next generation of workers and maintaining the 'nonproductive' sector of the population —

wives, children, the old and sick — are placed almost exclusively on the shoulders of those engaged in petty peasant production, in the main substance agriculture.

The agriculture activity of the Bantustans is not divorced from the industrial economy of South Africa. It does not represent a tribal 'hangover' in the sense that it is antagonistic to the capitalist mode of production. The 'tribal economy' is a necessary component to the process of capital accumulation in South Africa, and as such has made South Africa an investors paradise for decades. Yet the white state has not only reduced capitalism's "social welfare" costs by delaying the full proletarianisation of the African worker's family. The efforts made to preserve tribal structures have in addition provided excellent means of controlling the movement of labour through the pass laws and hampered the development of independent black trade union organisation.

Legassick and Hemson write that the 'grand design' of apartheid 'is not a product of irrational racial prejudice. The aim is that the majority of the African working population and their dependents should be situated as "citizens" in the Bantustans and, although fully proletarianised, should be permitted into urban-industrial areas only for the term of their work; for the period in which they are selling their labour power as a commodity. The system is administered by labour bureaux in the Bantustans. From the Bantustans manufacturing industry can swell its labour supply in times of industrial expansion. The social costs of reproduction of labour are transferred to the Bantustan governments. Troublesome African labour organisers are expelled to the Bantustans, where the black mark on their computerised cards will ensure that they never get a job again. From the Bantustans can be recruited the labour to break a strike. By this means the African working class is divided from other black workers (Coloured and Indian) as well as, in two ways, within itself. Contract workers are divided from settled urban workers, they live in prison-like hostels rather than semi-prison locations. Contract workers, as citizens of arbitrarily

defined "tribal" Bantustans, are divided among themselves. The social power of the collective labourer in production is opposed by the institutional structure imposed by the state. The Bantustans are the form in which the industrial reserve army exists in South Africa."

The disciplining of black labour is also undertaken by the Bantustan leaders for whom the white media attempt to provide an anti-government cloak, so as to cover the fact that the chiefs rely on the Vorster regime for their posts and salaries. Revolt against the tribal institutions is therefore bound up with the social and political emancipation of the black proletariat. Such a revolt will prove difficult for an emerging black 'state bourgeoisie' to subvert since potential black bourgeois rulers are quite clearly puppets in the hands of the existing state.

Foreign capital, even if it wished to, would find it difficult in the extreme to overturn the Bantustanisation process in South Africa. As the authors point out, it was the Bantustan policy which produced a massive increase in the flow of foreign capital into South Africa, with foreign companies pioneering the establishment of industrial complexes in the 'border' areas. Despite a formal opposition to apartheid, foreign capital is incapable of mounting a real challenge to the system for two fundamental reasons. Firstly, the high profitability of the South African economy is due to the fact that is run along racist lines and the dismantling of racist legislation would severely lower the level of imperialist investment in the economy. Secondly, the chances of finding a 'neo-colonial' alternative to the present structure would be extremely difficult because of the absence of a viable black alternative to the present white bourgeois government.

'Racial capitalism' cannot, however, be viewed entirely from the angle of the benefits it bestows upon foreign investors. Such an approach would neglect much of the political side of the question and lead us into the trap of supposing that the apartheid policy is solely designed to suit the interests of strong sections of capitalism among the imperial bourg-

oisie. It is quite clear that weaker sections of the capitalist class and other classes in South Africa society played a major role in the development of apartheid. The alliances between classes and fractions of classes form a complex matrix in the context of South Africa and a comprehensive understanding of social development of that country from the point of view of Marxism requires a fuller examination of these alliances. We cannot expect this problem to be adequately explored in a short pamphlet which deals specifically with foreign capital's relation to apartheid. However, the role played in particular by the white working class was quite crucial in institutionalising apartheid, and although the authors touch on this at various points in the pamphlet, they do not give it the weight it deserves.

The fact that South African capitalism has not developed along "normal" (i.e. European or more correctly British) lines has also meant that the labour movement has grown in a manner contrary to the "normal" state of affairs in western European capitalist countries. Just as the bourgeois economists have misconceptions about the nature of the system they attempt to justify — misconceptions which divorce the ideology of apartheid from 'economics' — so too do those who champion social democratic and trade union reformism. The views of South Africa's future held by the labour bureaucrats in the International Labour Organisation and the British TUC are very similar to those of the "progressive" capitalist corporations. Both are interested in preserving the notions of "reform" and "equality" being possible under bourgeois society, yet, as is to be expected, the labour reformists place a greater emphasis on their white counterparts to bring about the "democratisation" of the apartheid state. In the scenario of the bureaucracy, the Trade Union Congress of South Africa has the capability of leading the black man away from the influence of 'subversives' into the practice of 'responsible' trade unionism.

Nevertheless, anyone actually looking at the history of the white working class in South Africa cannot fail to conclude that TUCSA is incapable of such a role. As Hemson

and Legassick point out TUCSA is a corporatist organisation registered with the state and determining many aspects of the state's labour policies.

Incorporation of leaders of illegal' black unions into the TUCSA structure will in no way lessen the pressure the state exercises on the black working class. Indeed it will have a quite contrary effect.

Apartheid is very much concerned with maintaining and extending the privileged position of the white working class as a necessary condition for the preservation of bourgeois rule in South Africa. Because of this foreign capital exercises a much lesser degree of influence in the formation of state policies than in many other capitalist countries. True, the state creates very favourable conditions for the accumulation of capital, both 'national' and foreign, and the interests of capital have to a large extent agreeably coincided with those of the white workers. Yet contradictions between the 'super-privileged' and the 'super-exploiters' have always existed. In the post-war period these contradictions have not produced great friction. The pamphlet's quote of Oppenheimer illuminates this point considerably. For this 'liberal' representative of the bourgeois, whose Progressive Party is the party of big capital but still has very little support from within the white community, "A caste system is not dangerous so long as it expresses a social reality, and similarly the existence of an industrial colour bar need not, at our present stage, prevent progress so long as it is not rigid but can be adapted to changing conditions..."

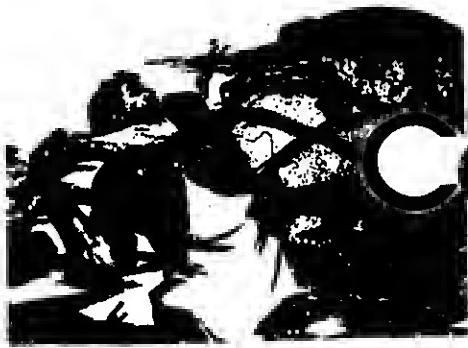
Oppenheimer is a wise enough capitalist not to allow his political principles, if we can call them that to get in the way of the more serious business of making money. But should a caste system become 'rigid', out of tune with 'social reality' and 'changing conditions', then what? The last three years have seen momentous change in Southern Africa and, with the situation in Zimbabwe, more of this damaging change to the prospects for white minority rule is coming. This presents foreign capital with enormous headaches. To safeguard their interests in South Africa the multi-nationals have to distance

themselves from the regime, and think about dismantling the caste system, to some degree at least.

But we have seen from the example of Northern Ireland how difficult it is for imperialism to lay to rest a sectarian monster of its own creation. In South Africa, where the privileges of the white workers are a thousand times more substantial than those of Protestant workers, the resistance to the dismantling of the caste system will be much greater. This is particularly so given the deteriorations of the South African economy and the widespread black resistance to apartheid after Soweto.

It seems that Legassick and Hemson are guilty of a little 'stick bending.' In their quite correct attempt to establish the complicity of foreign capital in the establishment of ultra-racist forms of capitalist exploitation they overstate the degree of hegemony foreign capital exercises in South Africa and underestimate the amount of autonomy the apartheid state has with respect to other imperialist interests. The nationalist Party government of Vorster is a junior partner of imperialism but it is a junior partner capable to a large extent of taking independent initiative. Furthermore, it is itself subject to internal divisions as regards the future of South African capitalism, with factions crudely distinguished as the 'verkrampte' representing mainly the interests of agricultural capital, and the 'veiligtes' who are more in tune with the needs of international capital. These and other conflicts are to be found among parties and classes in the white community at large.

Legassick and Hemson have produced a paper which is a refreshing change from the usual empiric studies of foreign capital we are accustomed to. As such it provides a useful starting point for a Marxist interpretation of the struggle there. In addition, the section dealing with labour movement solidarity with the liberation movement provides a good programme for militants to conduct such work. It does however raise a number of questions, both explicitly and implicitly, which require a great deal more research and discussion among those who wish to advance the cause of black liberation in South Africa.



# International Communist

COVER: Top, French colonial troops round up Vietnamese Independence fighters in late 1945. The Stalinists welcomed the French in, while the Trotskyists kept fighting against imperialism. Bottom: left, Ta Thu Thau, Vietnamese Trotskyist leader, murdered by the Stalinists in 1946; right, Vietnamese Trotskyist papers from the '30s and '40s. Illustrations taken from 'Stalinism and Trotskyism in Vietnam', Spartacist pamphlet [available from IST, BCM Box 4272, London WC1V 6XX].

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